THE HIGHER HINDUISM
IN RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

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The Higher Hinduism in Relation to Christianity

Certain Aspects of Hindu Thought from the Christian Standpoint

BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE LATE
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From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness lead me to light,
From death lead me to immortality.'
Brihad-Aranya Upanishad.

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INTRODUCTION

I TAKE great pleasure in writing a few words of introduction to this important essay by my friend Rev. T. E. Slater, of the London Mission, Bangalore. The present work was submitted in 1899 to the Saxon Missionary Conference at Leipzig in response to an invitation for a 'Missionary Prize Essay' on 'a presentation of the fundamental views of the Hindūs, religious and philosophical, according to the Vedas, Upanishads, and of the Brahminic (especially the Vedānta) philosophy, and an estimate of the same from a Christian point of view.' The Essay (which thus determined the form and context of the present work) was to have in view the fact that, in the intellectual struggle which has been evoked by Christian missions in India, the educated Hindūs are, indeed, ready to throw over the popular religion, but cling so much the more tenaciously to their more ancient faith as contained in their best religious literature. It was designed to instruct educated friends of missions at home in the true genius of the Hindū religion and its fundamental distinction from Christianity, as well as to aid the missionary abroad in his conflict with Hinduism.

In response to this invitation, eight essays were sent in, five of which were written in German and three in English. The prize was awarded by three German scholars to a

German missionary in India, and of the essay contained in the following pages they remark: 'This work reviews Sanskrit literature over a fairly wide range. There are constantly the movements of the thought of a highly-cultured and judicious man, who perhaps looks for that which concerns Christianity—salvation for India—rather in a gradual change in all the modes of thought in India, especially among the cultured and thinking classes, than in the immediate winning of some thousands of single souls. Both ways may lead to the same goal. The writer knows the religious movements in India from personal observation. That which he adduces with regard to the already apparent influence of Christian ideas upon Hindū modes of thought is very instructive.

I have found great inspiration and valuable guidance in the reading of Mr. Slater's essays and annual reports on Hinduism and Christianity. His work on the Upanishads is one of rare insight, and I know of no other man in India better fitted to interpret Christianity to the Hindūs and Hinduism to all intelligent Christians. My own observations and studies have convinced me that the method of sympathetic approach is the only proper method in dealing with the educated non-Christian classes of Asia. By training, experience, and by the cast of his mind, Mr. Slater has illustrated the true and wise Christian temper in the approach of the Occidental to the Oriental spirit.

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INDIA is pre-eminently the abode of religions, and the richest mine of psychological ideas. The land of the Vedic hymns—those 'Songs before Sunrise'—the home of Brāhmanism, the birthplace of Buddhism, the refuge of Zoroastrianism and Mohammedanism, there is no country where we can better study the origin, growth, and decay of religion than in India.

And if we want to judge of a religion fairly, we must try to study it, as far as possible, in the mind of its founder or chief masters; understand its best ideals, and not see only the depraved and repulsive side. At the same time, an estimate of a religion can never be accurate and complete unless based on its manifestations in the daily life of the masses, on the tone of mind and type of character it produces. Yet he who reverently and sympathetically studies the way in which various races have worshipped God, while loathing the degrading rite still loving the

misguided devotee, will increase his power to lead on his fellow-men to greater light; since the measure of a man's love is the measure of his power. We shall never gain the non-Christian world until we treat its religions with justice, courtesy, and love; 'treat them as a rich man should treat his poorer brothers; drawing near to them, getting on common ground with them, and then sharing with them his rich inheritance.' For those religious truths that have been venerated for ages as the felt facts of man's inner consciousness, we claim for the spiritual Christ who was immanent as grace and truth in human thought prior to the Incarnation, the Light of every saint and seer who has relieved the darkness of the pagan world.[1]

Religions illuminate one another: and though it is true that other *Sāstras* yield the student of the New Testament little spiritual aliment for his own soul, yet Christianity cannot be fully appreciated unless viewed in relation to other historic faiths; and the study of comparative religion, which should be diligently pursued by all intending missionaries, and which demonstrates, not only that man was made for religion, but *what* religion he was made for, is one of the most promising and fruitful for the future of the Church and of the world. Discovering, as it does, points of contact and elements of truth in systems outside our own; that no religion lies in utter isolation from the rest, but that each, being the manifestation of a human *want*, has had a *raison d'être*, a place to fill, and a work to do, in the great evolutionary scheme; it has led to the cultivation of a broader and more generous spirit towards

[1] Like the Scandinavian idea of Balder the Beautiful, so the Hindū thought of the Sat-Guru or Saguna-Mūrtti, the Buddhist thought of Sākya Muni and of the Grand Llama of Thibet—'the true high priest of the universe'—together with the theophanies claimed by Hindūs as well as Hebrews, point to the wide diffusion of the Christ idea.

these ancient faiths which have endured precisely according to the amount of truth they have contained, to the fitness of their doctrine for the special circumstances of race and culture, and to the degree in which they have *witnessed to Him who is the 'Heir of all the ages,' the Fulfiller of 'the unconscious prophecies of heathendom.'*

In the light of a Providential guidance, those religious societies that have advanced through centuries of growth, and written the pathetic story of their human interests and endeavours, their aspirations and their miseries, in their temples, laws, and homes, are destined for a diviner purpose than to be swept away as vestiges of evil, with no message to be delivered to the modern world. For, rightly conceiving the depth and height and exceeding breadth of Christ's religion, we behold it assimilating and adapting all that was valuable in the ancient civilizations; drawing into its pure and onward current all that was best in the fields of virtue and of truth; finding expression for all the various aspirations that are separately emphasized by the old religions; gathering up, explaining, and consummating the lessons of all previous revelations; while, at the same time, fully and for ever proving the incompleteness or the falsity of the views that have kept humanity from God.

For the best and brightest products of the Hindū spirit are still partial and one-sided, faint approximations of the sum and circle of Christian theism, fragmentary truths that lose their power over the mind and life because they lack the support of other kindred verities, and cannot be welded together in one definite body of belief. It is not the same thing to see precious stones scattered in different quarries and to see them combined in a beautiful mosaic. The Hindū writings are the product of a national genius, but there is *no orderly development, no progressive manifestation of truth*; they lead up to no commanding eminence from

which all becomes clear. They constitute an anthology, not one organic whole: whereas, in the historical Christ, the idea and the fact are for ever wedded; the substance of all ancient shadows is revealed.

Nevertheless, behind the outward expression we have to recognise the deep religious instinct of the Hindū. Religion has been an aspect of his very existence; indeed, to him existence has had no other meaning than the realization of religion. Even secular education has been imparted in India through a religious medium; while all the social functions of the community are religious to the core. If to the old Greek the universe was an expression of art and beauty, if to the Roman it was an expression of law and order, to the Hindū it is an expression of the Divine. His one absorbing ideal has been to penetrate into the mystery of being. An Anglo-Indian Collector once stated, in a certificate given to a Hindū clerk of his, that he was in every way a very good clerk, but that he was 'always *in search of God*'; 'whom,' the Collector added, 'he will never be able to find!' The Hindū poet-philosopher, casting a glance at the beautiful flower with which he might worship the Deity, asks: 'How can I bring myself to pluck it, seeing that it is *Thyself* that is there?' He sees the Divine everywhere and in everything. It is the one ultimate certainty, the underlying reality of all existence. Religion to such a one is an implanted desire, an imperious necessity; his ritual being no mere symbol, but the channel through which flows his religious feeling to its final beatitude; and often, when he is mastered by it, it becomes a passion, and, when manifested in extreme forms, even a vice. It claims all, and he is its very slave. Under its commanding influence, numbers of devotees have left home, and wife, and children; and powerful monarchs have abandoned their thrones and palaces to meditate in

solitary forests on the problems of existence, and to seek to attain the Divine.

The spirit of India's religions has thus been a reflective spirit, hence its philosophical character; though Hindū mythology as well as philosophy—the popular as well as the esoteric side—are alike a world of religious ideas; and, to understand and appreciate them, we must look beyond the barbaric shows and feasts and ceremonies, and get to the undercurrents of native thought. Hindūism is a growth from within; and, to study it, we have to lay bare that inward, subtle soul which, strangely enough, explains the outward form with all its extravagances; for India's gross idolatry is connected with her ancient systems of speculative philosophy, and with an extensive literature in the Sanskrit language; her Epic, Purānic, and Tāntric mythologies and cosmogonies have a theosophic basis.[1]

What is styled 'Hindūism,' however, is a vague eclecticism; the amalgam of all the religious ideas and usages of the past; the sum total of manifold shades of belief, and still more, in the present day, of rigid caste laws and accumulated customs; for its one changeless feature is its social order, and wherever caste is Hindūism exists. We cannot properly speak of *the* religion of India any more than we can speak of India as a country. It is not a political name, but only a geographical expression, marking the territory of many nations and languages. So almost every phase of religious thought and philosophic speculation has been represented in India. Some of the Hindū

[1] The Tāntric idea of the production of the universe by the blending of the male and female principles—the quiescent and the active (*sakti*) —which lies at the root of the whole of the later mythology of India, owes its development to the popularization of the Sānkhya philosophic idea of the union of the two principles *Purusha* (soul of the universe) and *Prakriti*, the primordial essence and evolvent of all things.

doctrines are theistic, some atheistic and materialistic, others pantheistic—the extremest form of idealism. Some of the sects hold that salvation is obtained by practising austerities, and by self-devotion and prayer; some that faith and love (*bhakti*) form the ruling principle; others, that sacrificial observances are the only means; while others, again, teach that knowledge is the 'highest way.' Some hold the doctrine of predestination; others, that of free grace. No assumption of its being a universal religion is therefore possible; it is rather a congeries of divergent systems of thought, of various types and characters of the outward life, each of which at one time or another calls itself Hindūism, but forms no part of a consistent whole.

In its contact with Buddhism, ancient Brāhmanism became modern Hindūism, which is generally admitted by Hindūs themselves to have been a degeneration. Buddhism was taken by the hand, and drawn back into the Brāhmanical system by the Brāhmans, who met it half-way by popularizing their own faith, and by providing popular deities for the people to counteract the commanding influence of the founder of Buddhism, and who ended by boldly adopting the Buddha himself—in spite of his atheistic teaching—as an incarnation of Vishnu. That has always been the astute policy of the Brāhmans. Not being guarded by a severe religious monotheism, firmly set in a historical revelation, as in the case of the Hebrews, they have perceived the power of compromise, and have overcome opposition by wise concessions and partial adaptations.

The term Hindūism thus expresses Brāhmanism after it had degenerated, and is now made up of that complicated system of polytheism and caste which has gradually resulted from the mixture of Brāhmanism and

Buddhism with the non-Aryan creeds of Dravidians [1] and aborigines. By the practice of a continuous compromise and receptivity, carried on for more than 2,000 years, it has arrived at its present condition. It has first borne with, and then accepted and digested and assimilated, something from almost all creeds. In this manner it has adopted much of the fetishism of the aborigines, and stooped to the practices of the various hill tribes, incorporating something of their sacrificial worship, and not scrupling to encourage demonolatry and the cult of the fish, boar, serpent, rocks, stones, and trees. It is true that this onward course has been regarded as a natural evolution of the Indian mind, which sees the Divine in everything; and pantheism has certainly been the strength as well as the weakness of Hindūism. It has enabled the Brāhman to adopt almost every god with which he came into contact,[2] to acknowledge nearly every idol, and to supply a philosophic or theosophic basis for its worship; but when thus guided by religious expediency Brāhmanism entered on a path where descent was easy and rapid, and religion passed from the region of thought to the realm of fable, in spite of the efforts of philosophers and the protests of successive reformers.

In the present day, this eclectic and heterogeneous character of Hindūism is freely admitted by Hindūs

[1] The name is given to the races of Southern and Central India, who speak languages other than those derived from the Sanskrit. See Caldwell's 'Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages.'

[2] One of the mediæval additions to the Hindū pantheon would seem to have been Jagannath in Orissa, which was originally a fetish of the non-Aryan forest-man. The common story current in Cuttack, as given by Dr. Hunter in his 'Imperial Gazetteer,' points to this. It shows how the 'blue god' of the aboriginal fowler became the Jagannath, the 'Lord of the World,' of the Brāhman.

themselves, who are quite unable to define it. Mr. Pramatha Nath Bose, F.G.S., M.R.A.S., the accomplished author of 'Hindū Civilization during British Rule,' observes (p. 45):

'In one sense it is a very ancient religion, in another sense it is not. Though professedly based upon the Vedas, it is no more like the Vedic religion than man is like the protoplasmic germ out of which he is supposed to have been evolved. It has grown during 3,000 years to be what it is at present. It is not the creed of the Rig-veda, nor of the Brāhmanas, nor of the Upanishads, nor of the Purānas; it is neither Saivism nor Vaishnavism, nor Sāktism; yet it is all these. It can hardly be called a homogeneous religion in the sense that Judaism and Zoroastrianism are among the older, or Christianity and Mohammedanism are among the more recent religions.'

Hindūism has thus many sides; but in all ages it has been presented in two different phases, apparently antagonistic—the philosophical and the popular. One of the most striking features of the religious life of India is that, side by side with culture and refinement and a keen philosophic spirit, is to be seen a grovelling and ignorant mass of idolatrous worshippers. And yet there is nothing incongruous in this. Pantheism and polytheism are in principle the same. They are but a higher and a lower form of one and the same view of the world. Pantheism is the refined, polytheism the vulgar, mode of deifying Nature. Pantheism, whether Hindū or Greek, seeks after unity amid individual phenomena; polytheism stops short at the phenomena and personifies them. So that Hindūism is at once Nature-worship or physiolatry in its main aspects, and fetish in its recognition of particular aspects of the forces that make for good or evil; polytheistic and pantheistic; idolatrous, ceremonial, and sectarian, and yet spiritualistic and transcendental.

To the Hindū mind there is no inconsistency in all this, which has simply to be stated to be condemned by the Western and monotheistic mind. All men, it is held, have finally to reach the same goal—union with the Supreme; but the paths are different, according to the nature of the individual, and every one is led on by easy, natural steps. That is why we see in India a manifold expression of religion and religious worship, varying from the grossest symbolism to an occult philosophy of the divine; from the adoration of personal and innumerable deities, whose pantheon stands unrivalled, to the calm contemplation of an impersonal Spirit.

And the philosopher has a subtle way of justifying the image-worship. 'We let the popular forms and belief work upward,' he says, 'until, by symbolical interpretation, they are seen to be the rough-hewn figures of a divine idea, as the mathematical diagram is only an outward help to pure reasoning. And, conversely, we work allegorically, embodying in an image or myth some abstract notion of the Energy that underlies all phenomena.' The Supreme Spirit, though never directly worshipped except by turning the thought abstractedly in—for 'It' is in all things—and having no temple in the whole of India, is yet held to be the real object of all offerings and religious services, whoever may be the particular god, or even fetish, worshipped. It is this conception that leads Brāhmans, by their all-pervading symbolism, to maintain that, though they appear polytheists, they are in reality monotheists—more correctly pantheists—and that Indian idolatry, unlike that of any other country, is of a distinctly spiritual kind; the affirmation growing out of the underlying unity that pervades the pantheon. That is the philosophical and orthodox defence of Hindū idolatry, which does not, however, divest it even of its grosser

excrescences. The character of the deities is more or less puerile and impure, and there are no compensating temples consecrated to Truth, Chastity, Clemency, Justice, Liberty, and other virtues, such as characterised the worship of the Greeks and Romans. The countless millions are left in the depths of ignorance and darkness, without any attempt to promote their elevation. The unthinking, ritual-loving masses are absorbed in the pursuit of ceremonialism, debauched by idolatrous and often obscene practices, and fascinated by a devotion to individual gods.

But when a Hindū begins to think seriously upon higher things, and to reason out his relation to the unseen and eternal, he invariably does so on the lines laid down some 3,000 years ago by Indian rishis, or seers, in what is called the Vedanta philosophy of the land. This line of thought, which rests on a fundamental basis altogether different from our own, is as instinctive with the Hindū of to-day as is the Christian doctrine of God and of life with the thinker of the West.

CHAPTER II

THE HINDU REVIVAL

Western Education in India—The Hindū Revival—Contributing Causes—Study of Sanskrit—Theosophical Society—Sentiment of Nationality—Power of Christianity—The Ārya Samāj—Transformed Idea of God—Christian Meanings read into Hindū Phraseology—The Brāhma Samāj—How influenced by Christianity.

THE last decade in India has been marked by a new religious enthusiasm, and the present time, so far as the condition of the more thoughtful classes is concerned, may be not inaptly described as the Renaissance period in the history of the Hindūs. The scientific and rationalistic spirit that is now abroad is the outcome of the Western education that has been imparted during the last fifty years in our schools and colleges through the medium of the English language, which is coming to occupy much the same position in India as the Greek language did in the old Roman Empire, and is fast becoming a bond of union. For a widespread and liberal education such as this, conducted by Western scholars on a Western basis, cannot exist in an Eastern land for half a century and produce no changes, religious and political, in the opinions, character, and aspirations of those who have been brought under its influence.

Previous to this period few people dreamed of questioning the meaning and utility of their religious and social institutions; but now a spirit of inquiry is abroad which subjects everything to critical examination, the inevitable result being a decay of superstitious beliefs and often much more than this.

Looking, therefore, at the educated classes generally, a state of religious unsettlement best describes them, though the sceptical spirit that was in vogue ten or twenty years ago has been gradually giving place to a *reaction in favour of ancient Hindūism.* There is, as a rule, a deeply-felt and openly-expressed dissatisfaction with popular and mythological Hindūism, and a growing indifference to its ceremonial, while a strong undercurrent has set in towards what is styled the Āryan or Vedic faith. Just as the scholars of mediæval times in Europe appealed to the reason and the imagination by eulogizing the speculations and poetry of the ancient world, so the Hindūs of to-day turn to their long-forgotten literature, and seek to meet the needs of society by a renovated Hindūism. The more thoughtful of the people have beaten a retreat from their temples to their sacred books. Conscious of the unsoundness of much of the outward structure of their faith, they have fallen back with the boldness of despair on their ancient philosophy, which is now thrust to the front as the main support of Hindūism. And it would be strange indeed if patriotic and naturally religious minds, in the midst of the modern ferment of thought, did not first turn to their own religious sources, and seek to bring out from their treasure-house things new and old. It is well, too, that they should carefully study their own highest ideals, in order to have revealed their utter inadequacy to satisfy the spirit when thoroughly awakened, and, above all, when alive to such

a sense of sin and need that only a Divine Saviour can meet the case. The religion of Christ must be the gainer ultimately.

Several circumstances have contributed to bring about the recent revival or reaction in favour of what may be called Neo-Hindūism.

Foremost must be placed the study of Sanskrit and Sanskrit literature by European scholars, the first impulse to which was given a hundred years ago by Sir William Jones, Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, who founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and translated the greatest of Hindū dramas, 'Sakuntalā,' and also the 'Laws of Manu.' He was followed by the careful researches of Henry Thomas Colebrook, the first comprehensive explorer of the literature of the Veda; by H. H. Wilson; and by such German Sanskritists as Schlegel, Bopp, Lassen,[1] Max Müller, Roth, and Weber. There has been no more receptive soil for the spirit of ancient Indian literature than Germany, whose absolute philosophy is closely allied to higher Indian thought, and the monumental work of Professor Max Müller, extending for nearly half a century, has enabled the East as well as the West to form some scientific estimate of the Hindū classics.

These labours have been popularized in India by such native scholars as Rājendralāla Mitra and Romesh Chandra Datta and Ānanda Rām Barua, so that the educated classes generally now understand something of the history of their religion, and know that their ancient faith was very different from modern Hindūism.

Further, the revival of Sanskrit learning in India itself, since the establishment of the three Presidency Universities in 1858, and the teaching of the Sanskrit language in the high schools and colleges of the land, have tended in the

[1] A Norwegian who became naturalized in Germany.

same direction; while a scientific English training has enabled Hindūs to sift the treasures of their literature, and to make a far more practical use of them than did the Pandits of an older school.

Again, the Theosophical Society, founded at New York in 1875 by Colonel Olcott, who, accompanied by Madame Blavatsky, went to India in 1880 and established branches in many places, with their headquarters at Madras, and which from the first has been distinctly anti-Christian, has done much to direct the attention of Hindūs to their own religion, which has ever been the home of the occult. Closely connected with this movement have been the phenomenal successes of two striking personalities, Mrs. Annie Besant and the late Swāmi Vivekānanda,[1] who figured at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, and who the last few years have extolled before admiring thousands of Hindūs the ancient glories of the East.

Then of late a strong feeling of nationality has been rising in the country. Educated Hindūs have been drinking the feverish wine of modern European thought, and understand what is meant in the West by progress and agitation. On the political side this spirit is manifested in the Indian National Congress, which assembles in large numbers every year to discuss, if not to deal practically with, the burning questions of the day; and, feeling that they belong to a great historic nation, Hindūs proudly attach themselves to the historic religion of the land. At the bottom of the 'Hindū revival,' and of all the present restlessness and ill-feeling towards Christianity, is the patriotic desire to preserve the integrity of *Bharata Kanda*, the ancient land of spirituality. As formerly in Japan, so in India now, Christianity and Christians are chiefly dis-

[1] His real name was Narendra Nath Datta; he was a graduate of the Calcutta University.

liked because these terms appear to be synonymous with whatever is opposed to the honour and independence of the nation. Every movement in India that would insure success must ally itself with this sentiment of nationality; hence the greater success of the *Ārya* Samāj movement, which is based on Indian lines, than of the *Brāhma* Samāj, which owes its origin mainly to Christianity.

It would seem, indeed, during the present transition stage, as though the main instruments of Western enlightenment—education and the printing-press—were telling almost as much in favour of reaction as of progress. Those brave Indian reformers, who are but a feeble band, and who propose to remove something more than the moss that has grown over the ancient fortress of Hindūism, are regarded by the more orthodox as deficient in a sense of beauty and taste, and are looked down upon as the courtly Cavaliers looked down upon the innovating Puritans of former times. The old culture movement in England, represented by Matthew Arnold, which took the form of sympathy towards ways of thought and life that had an old-world air about them, has found an echo in India; but there it has resulted in narrowing the Hindū's range of vision, and in centering his sympathies within his own creed. It is their own past that has the old-world air; it is *their* ancient ideals that are the lost causes; and admiration of the paganism of the Sanskrit classics breeds sympathy sometimes even for popular Hindūism, as seen in the revival of the Krishna cult among some Hindūs and the rise of a Sivāji cult among the Mahrattas.

And here we may note a significant fact in which the inherent weakness of Hindūism is disclosed. If it looks to the revival of the national faith in regard to religion, it yet *looks to the West for its social and political ideals.* In this strange divergence it confesses its utter weakness as

a social force; that there is nothing in its ancient institutions to revive which will fit the nation for its keen struggle for existence; but that for the elaboration of a better order of society it must look outside itself. This severance of religion from sociology, this failure of Hindūism as a reforming agency, a regenerator of society, an instrument of progress, robs it of half its strength, and encourages the Christian advocate to hope that, as the thoughtful men of India come to study the sociological results of Christ's religion in the West, and see it to be the pioneer of all true progress, the only effective agency in destroying the old evils, they may be led to pay a deeper respect to its underlying and distinctive truths. Applied Christianity is now the demand of the Western world, and possibly the great Indian nation, born to new life in the present age, may find a way to Christ through the social and political avenues of our time.

And while the circumstances that have been described have all contributed to bring about the present national awakening and uplifting, and ferment of thought, there can be no doubt that Hindūism has been put upon its mettle by the advancing power of Christianity, whose illuminating and quickening ideas have already modified, and in some directions completely changed, the religious impressions of the people. The fact is that, though a new spirit is abroad working under the old forms of Hindūism, whose ethics are gradually being penetrated and transformed by the ideals of the West, this movement is not so much the result of an honest conviction of the soundness of either the dogmas or the institutions of Hindūism as a patriotic attempt to *harmonize its higher ideals with those of Christianity*, which are seen to be everywhere gaining ground in the world. It bears certain

resemblances to the pretensions of the Gnostics of Alexandria in the second century, who held the key to the higher spiritual philosophy which attempted to unify Christ's teaching with the esoteric wisdom of Greece and Egypt. The leaven of Christianity will work, and in its own way, and in its natural affinity with certain pre-existing conditions of thought will form semi-Christianized philosophies like the neo-Platonism of Alexandria, which explained away the objectionable features of the old mythology, and tried to fight Christianity largely with its own weapons; and these eclectic systems will, for a time at least, give a distinct support to the old religions of the country, and even infuse new life into them, presenting many features of the Gospel, though non-Christian in their basis.

Such a movement is seen in the *Ārya Samāj* of North India, founded at Lahore in 1877 by Pandit Dayānanda Sarasvatī, and the outcome of the solvent action of Western science and Christian influence upon modern Hindūism. The revelations of God in the Vedas and in Nature are the basis of this faith, though the arbitrary and extravagant interpretations of their ancient literature by the founder and his followers do not find favour with orthodox Hindūs. Idolatry and its attendant rites are held to have no place in the true religion, while Rāma, Krishna, and other objects of popular adoration, are treated euphemistically as 'pious or powerful princes of the olden times.' The Samāj opposes Indian theism—the supposed monotheism of the Vedas—to what is called 'foreign theism,' and enlists on its side the patriotic preference for Indian literature and thought. But in attempting to bring the old Āryan faith into line with the results of natural science, it is at issue with the findings of Sanskrit scholars, who represent the Vedic literature as that of a primitive people

innocent of scientific accuracy. Its life has undoubtedly been quickened by the presence of Christianity, whose weapons it freely uses in an active and hostile propaganda.[1]

Perhaps the most remarkable transformation that has come over the educated mind of India is seen in connection with the *idea of God*, which has become more refined and accurate, and with the corresponding idea of prayer. There was a time when the Divine personality could not be perceived except in terms of polytheism, nor Divine omnipresence except in terms of pantheism, nor Divine holiness except in terms of dualism. But into the midst of the pantheism of ages there has slowly penetrated, through the medium of Christian teaching, the idea of a personal and holy God, the foundation-truth of all real religion. Islam, which, with its severe monotheism, had a splendid chance in India, never acted thus on the religious mind of the people. A century ago God was not spoken of nor thought of as He is now. One seldom sees now in print the names of the Hindū deities, with their peculiar attributes attached to them, such as may be found in Ziegenbalg's 'South Indian Gods,' a faithful representation of Hindūism as it existed two centuries ago, unchristianized by Western importations. One rarely sees even the name *Brahman* used, the name given to the Great Spirit, the *Ātman*, or Self of the Upanishads. The general and more personal name *Ishvara* is rather employed, and He is spoken of much in the same terms as a Christian would speak of God. Holiness and hatred of sin, and mercy apart from human merit, are not attributes often found ascribed to God in past Hindū literature; but now we have frequent reference to them, although the moral and logical inconsistency of the position does not strike those who,

[1] For an account oi the Ārya Samāj, see the Panjāb Census Report for 1891.

while professing theism, yet remain members of a system that denies it.

Hindūs who have acquired enlightened notions of religious truth through coming into contact with Christianity are apt to think that certain words and phrases used in their religious books may be understood *in the same sense which they themselves now attach to them*, and so come to claim for those books some of the fundamental conceptions of Christianity. Take the very first article of Christian theism—God the *Creator* of the heavens and the earth. That is now the faith of many; but it cannot by any contrivance be got out of Hindūism, with its uncreated material cause, on the one hand, or its doctrine of *Māyā* or illusion on the other, according to the philosophical system that may be followed. And so we find the late Nilakantha Goreh, [1] an eminent Sanskrit scholar, who became as eminent a Christian scholar, declaring that, as an orthodox Hindū, believing in what the Hindū scriptures taught, he held that nothing was created, and that the universe had an illusory existence. Such, he says, was his firm belief and the belief of his forefathers. And '*if I had not learned it from Christianity*,' he adds, 'I could never have known, as none of my countrymen, learned or unlearned, has ever known, that God has created all things without any pre-existing material cause.' In the same way Christian truth has given Hindūs very different conceptions from those that their books convey of the Divine omnipotence generally, which is limited in Hindūism by uncreated, self-existent substances and beings; of the

[1] He received in baptism the name of Nehemiah, and was the author of one of the most valuable treatises on Hindū philosophy, which was translated from Hindi into English, under the title 'A Rational Refutation of the Hindū Philosophical Systems.' See the 'Life of Father Goreh,' by C. E. Gardner, S.S.J.E. (Longmans, Green and Co.).

Divine mercy, which is conditioned by the merit and demerit of souls; of the Divine holiness, which is compromised by the unholy acts of certain incarnations.

Students of missions are familiar with the almost Christian tone of much of the writings of the members of the *Brahma Samāj*, or Theistic Church of New India, which was founded by the Rājā Rām Mohan Ray, who was born in 1774, and died in England in 1842; was then guided by Debendra Nath Tagore, but was chiefly associated, from 1862 to 1884, with the name of Keshab Chandra Sen, and since his death with that of Protap Chandra Mazumdār.[1] This body of devout men has drawn largely from the Bible, and gathered much inspiration from Christ. Its genesis was once well described by Chandra Sen: '*Christianity came*, and moved with our Oriental faith, and from that time we grew,' though since his death, and under the influence of the more distinctly 'Hindū Revival,' which has been overshadowing it, there has been some reaction towards the older Hindūism. Still, Brahmist theology is saturated with Christian ideas, though rejecting many Christian doctrines.

Especially is the devotional spirit of India being stimulated by the presence of the Christian leaven. The prayers that are offered in Brahmist assemblies and the prayer unions among some young Hindūs are due to Christian influence. Public worship, as understood and practised by Christians when they meet for praise and prayer and popular religious instruction, has been hitherto unknown in India. No assembly of Hindūs, with the solitary exception of the Brahma Samāj, is ever convened for offering spiritual homage to the Supreme Being, or

[1] For the history of the Samāj, see Miss Collet's 'Brahmo Year-Book,' London, 1883, and 'Life of Keshab Chandra Sen,' by Protap Chandra Mazumdār.

for teaching the people how to know and serve Him. Ceremonial worship is offered to every conceivable form of being, but none to Him who is admitted to be the only source of Being. No temple exists to His honour, nor are there any rites prescribed for His worship.

The distance, then, that the Brahma Samājes have travelled from the old creeds and practices of India is thus very great, and we have only to think of such men as Rām Mohan Ray and his 'Precepts of Jesus,' and Keshab Chandra Sen and his religious utterances in Calcutta and England, and Protap Chandra Mazumdār, the present cultured and devout leader of the Samāj, and his 'Oriental Christ' and 'The Spirit of God,' to be struck with the remarkable way in which Christ and His teaching have influenced modern Hindū thought. Mr. Mazumdār has observed: 'The New Testament is the source of a hundred developments of personal, social, and spiritual reform among thoughtful Hindūs.' And, in still more striking words, he wrote: 'Christ is a tremendous reality. The destiny of India hangs upon the solution of His nature and our relation to Him.'

And, speaking generally, in all recent religious reforms the Vedic idea has been modified by Biblical theism and Christian thought, as was seen in the history of Brahmoism itself as far back as 1854, when it came to the conclusion that it was impossible to frame its advanced creed upon the Vedas and Upanishads. And in other directions, not excepting the revived Vedānta of the present day, those who in India have not studied the Bible for naught are *reading Christianity into Hindūism*, and finding there under its light truths that were never found before, instead of saying, as they did twenty years ago, of our religion, 'It is not *true*,' they are now saying, 'It is not *new*.' Tending more and more to the belief in the underlying unity of all

religions, they are maintaining that the faiths of the East do not differ materially from Christianity in their essential principles and more important teachings, and so, even in reform speeches and on the National Congress platforms, as well as in Vedāntic pamphlets, not to speak of Brahmist services and prayers, there are frequent allusions to the Christian Scriptures, together with a more or less Christian colour pervading the thought. To the assimilative mind of India there is no difficulty in thus placing Christian thought in the midst of Hindūism, and regarding it as a part thereof. We may rest assured that the truth thus absorbed will live, and will ultimately displace the thoughts and ideas that have ceased to thrill with life.

CHAPTER III

PERIODS OF HINDU LITERATURE

Successive Periods of Hindū Literature—Vedism, Brāhmanism, Modern Hindūism—Phases of Brāhmanism: (*a*) Ritualistic, (*b*) Philosophical, (*c*) Mythological, (*d*) Nomistic—The Darsanas—Vishnu Worship—Doctrine of *Avatāras* and of the *Trimūrtti*—Hindū and Christian Incarnation Ideas compared—Purānic and Tāntric Literature—Why the World was left to run its Religious Course.

In passing now to a study of the more ancient forms of Āryan religious thought, as represented in the Vedas and Upanishads—which Hindūs are seeking to revive in the present day—we go back to about 1500 B.C., and trace its movements from (1) the *Vedism* of the Rig-veda—the sacred knowledge—whose Mantras (canticles and prayers), with their non-idolatrous deification of the forces of Nature, and simple sacrificial offerings, form the first and chief Bible of the Hindū religion; on through (2) the matured stage of *Brāhmanism*, extending roughly from 800 B.C. to 1200 A.D., with its four phases—(*a*) the ritualistic, (*b*) the philosophical, (*c*) the mythological, (*d*) the nomistic (code of Manu); till it finally emerges, in a debased form, in (3) *modern Hindūism.* These represent the three main divisions of Hindū thought.

Leaving the Vedic source, together with the earliest

Brāhmanical stage, to be considered more fully hereafter, we shall select only certain aspects of mythological and modern Hindūism, from which the educated classes of India are now beating a retreat.

The six Darsanas, or systems of philosophy as such—the Nyāya, the Vaiseshika, the Sānkhya, the Yoga, the Mimānsā, and the Vedānta, delivered in *Sūtras* or aphorisms—need not detain us. Of these, three only properly answer to their name, the Nyāya, the Sānkhya, and the Vedānta, and their object is not philosophic search for truth, but the redemption of men from the burden of existence. The Nyāya, however, is strictly a system of logic, its philosophical inquiry resembling the methods of Aristotle.

The rationalistic and atheistic system of Kapila, the Sānkhya, with which the latest German philosophies, that of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann's Philosophy of the Unconscious, have much in common, is regarded as the first recorded system of philosophy, and contains nearly all that India has produced, pure and simple, in that department.[1] It has, practically, no theology, for, though its founder admitted the existence of gods, they were only emanations from *Prakriti* (Nature), into which they are ultimately to be absorbed, as are all forms of material life. The final liberation of the soul from material bondage is only gained by a knowledge of the external world and of the soul's higher nature; and the soul, in an unconditioned state, together with nature, or substance, exists eternally. The practical side of this system has an important theistical development in the Yoga of Patanjali, which maintains that it is possible, by profound meditation and extreme forms of asceticism, to attain union with the Divine principle.

[1] For an account of the Sānkhya system see 'Hindu Philosophy,' by J. Davies.

The Vedānta, based on the Upanishads, which is to form hereafter our main study, is devoted to the support and explanation of the religious doctrines of the Vedas,[1] and in holding that there is in reality only one existence it teaches the doctrine of *a-dvaita*, or non-dualism, as decidedly as Schelling or Hegel.

With the three *Darsanas* Indian philosophy practically ends, and the principle of soul exhausts itself, and to turn the philosophies into the religion of the great Hindū masses the Brāhmans had to give life to the abstract essences of the schools by endowing them with personality and will, which became exemplified in the popular gods of Hindū mythology, Brāhma,[2] Vishnu, and Siva.

This, then, brings us to the mythological phase of Brāhmanism, which is synchronous with the rise and development and decline of Buddhism, its bible being the legendary epic poems of the Rāmāyana [3] and the Mahābhārata,[4] called an *Itihāsa*, or sacred history, together

[1] All the *Darsanas* are based upon the Vedas; but the Nyāya, being founded on sensations and being an exoteric doctrine, is conveniently introductory to the Sānkhya, which is based on emotions, and reduces external Nature from the category of substance to that of qualities; while the Sānkhya, again, is introductory to the Vedānta, which is essentially esoteric, and asks the simple question, 'What *is* and what is *not?*' Hence Ballantyne observes that the categories of the Nyāya and the Sānkhya were 'merely scaffolding' for reaching the pinnacle of the Vedānta; and it is in this order that in Hindū schools, where all three are taught, the learner usually takes them up.

[2] Brahmā, with the accent, to indicate the masculine—a member of the Hindū triad—and to distinguish it from the neuter Brahma, the Absolute.

[3] It describes the doings of Rāma, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, and consists of about 24,000 stanzas.

[4] The longest epic in the world, consisting of some 220,000 lines, and a vast thesaurus of Hindū traditions, legendary history, ethics

with the popular eclectic poem of the Bhagavad-gītā,[1] to which we shall return hereafter. In their conflict with their great rival Buddhism, which was a revolt against caste and priestcraft, Brāhmanical ascendancy and Vedic authority, sacrifices and ritualism, the Brāhmans had to provide for the wants which Buddhism had created, and to combine their own esoteric doctrine with the prevailing popular belief. The first thing needed for this purpose was a popular conception of deity. None of the abstract gods of the later Vedic hymns, still less the impersonal Brahma—the Absolute—which lay behind them all, had ever become a god of the people; while the worship of the more personal Brahmā (masc.) had never been popular. But the deity wanted was found in Vishnu, a name given in the Rig-veda to the Sun-god (Sūrya), and in the closing centuries B.C. he becomes elevated to a supreme position in his heaven, Vaikuntha, with his consort Lakhsmī, the goddess of love and fruitfulness, dwelling by his side. In the same way, Rudra, the stern Storm-god of the Rig-veda, became transformed into the Mahādeva (great god) or Siva of later Brāhmanism. In ascetic power he is superior to all other beings, though he is also a god of fruitfulness, and as such is worshipped under the emblematic form of the phallic *lingam*, the symbol of the power of propagation.

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and philosophy—the source of many of the Purānas. Here Krishna becomes the great man-god, the chief incarnation of Vishnu. For a list of editions and translations of these epics up to 1847, see Gildemeister's 'Bibliothec. Sanscr. Specimen,' pp. 29–53. A complete translation of both has been made by Hipp. Fauche. The Rāmāyana, together with the Rig-veda, has also been translated by Griffiths and by M. N. Datta (Calcutta).

[1] Translations of the Bhagavad-gītā have been made by Em. Burnouf, 1861; F. Lorinser, 1869; K. T. Telang, Bombay, 1875; and more recently by Mrs. Annie Besant.

In like manner, his consort appears in a double character, as Ambicā, the 'good mother'; and as Kālī, the 'black one'; or Durgā, the 'terrible,' in which last two forms she is worshipped with revolting, bloody sacrifices. In these twofold aspects, as well as in the introduction of various foreign elements, such as the worship of serpents and spirits (*bhutas*), is to be traced the fusion of Āryan and non-Āryan conceptions of divinity.

In connection with Vishnu worship, we have the doctrine of *avatāras*,[1] or incarnations, or 'descents,' and it has been this doctrine that has excited so much popular enthusiasm. Just as the Buddha becomes man to redeem the world from misery, so Vishnu descends in human form in times of great emergency to end the struggle between order and disorder, and to bring deliverance by gaining the victory for the good, though the enemy to be vanquished is not sin in the human heart, but evil under the form of demon, king, or giant. By means of this doctrine, famous mythic heroes, such as Rāma-chandra, the hero of the Rāmāyana, who extended his exploits to Ceylon, and Krishna, both of them ancient gods of the night, become identified with Vishnu, and have always been the most popular objects of worship. In the cultus of Krishna, which ultimately spread over the whole of India, Vishnu worship reaches its climax,

[1] Among the oldest of these is the 'dwarf' incarnation, borrowed from Vishnu's sun-myth, and found as early as the *Satapatha Brāhmana*, and which, as Lassen conjectures, was derived, together with other forms, from non-Āryan mythology. Vishnu appears also as the 'fish,' who saves Manu at the deluge, as the 'tortoise,' who supports the earth in the creation at the churning of the heavenly ocean, as the 'boar,' which restores it to equilibrium when it has sunk into the under world, and as the 'man-lion,' who destroys the way of a demon king. (See 'Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions,' by G. P. Tiele.) At the end of the present age (*Kaliyuga*) a deliverer is to appear, and introduce the *Krita* age of righteousness.

though in the oldest versions of the great epic, the Mahābhārata, which reflected the belief of the Kshattriyas, or warrior caste, he had not reached the supreme position that he holds under Brāhmanical influence in the latter redactions of the poem. At different times he appears as a man, a wise moralist, counsellor of the Pāndavas in the great war with the Kurus, as a mighty hero and demi-god of miraculous power, till at last he becomes the incarnation of Vishnu, and, in the Bhagavad-gītā, an episode of the Mahābhārata, proclaims himself as Supreme Being and the redeemer. A still later date recounts in the Purānas the legends of his miraculous birth,[1] his youthful amours and immoral sports.

The worshippers of the three chief gods, Brahmā, Vishnu, and Siva, were for the most part hostile to one another, and the exclusive adoration either of Vishnu or Siva, which grew out of the rivalry of the sects, would seem to account for the Indian tendency to monotheism, which some students of religion, such as Weber,[2] trace to an acquaintance with Christianity. Various endeavours, however, at reconciliation were made, and the three gods, with equal rights ascribed to each of them, were sometimes placed together, or Vishnu and Siva were united in one, and then with Brahmā, and in this way the important doctrine of the *Trimūrtti*, or triple manifestation, arose. The conception had, indeed, been adumbrated in the Veda, where Agni is regarded as having a triple character, and later a triad of principal gods, Agni, Indra, and Sūrya, is recognised; while in the philosophic Vedānta,

[1] For a full discussion of the question of the transference of certain facts of the Christian Gospels to Hindūism and their application to Krishna, as carried on chiefly between Professors Weber and Lassen, see Muir's 'Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers,' Introduction.

[2] In his 'Indische Studien,' i. 423.

though the eternal, impersonal Brahma is absolutely one, yet 'It' is made up of a triunity of essences—pure unconscious existence (*Sat*), pure thought (*Chit*), and pure bliss (*Ānanda*). But the prominent idea of the later doctrine of the *Trimūrtti*, whose first appearance some scholars place in the fourteenth century A.D., is that the three gods represent forms of one Supreme Being in his threefold activity as Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, though Siva is not only the dissolver, but the reproducer, according to the Hindū conception that all death leads to new life, all destruction to reproduction.

This doctrine rudely resembles, nominally rather than in reality, the Christian Trinity. As in other religions and philosophy, especially the Greek, so in Hindūism, human thought has felt after the idea of God, has striven by a metaphysical and elaborative process to formulate that idea, without succeeding in finding the actuality. In each case, when compared with the original and beautiful conception and creation of Christian theology, which is based on Divine love and the social nature of that love, and which changed the abstract processes of philosophy into 'the terms of a concrete relation,' the differences are at once seen to be radical. This has been so forcibly pointed out by a foremost British master of comparative religion, Principal A. M. Fairbairn, that we cannot do better than quote his words:[1]

'The Hindu Trimūrtti only represents the adaptation of a pantheistic idea to historical conditions. The co-ordination of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Siva is recent, and may be described as the result of a religious diplomacy, all the more real that it was unconscious and undesigned, and a metaphysical speculation that acted here just as it had acted everywhere. Each of the deities had a prior and very ancient history. They ran back into the Vedic period, and are the

[1] 'Christ in Modern Theology,' p. 395, fifth edition.

survivals of different mythological schools and tendencies. Brahmā (masculine) is the deification of the priestly idea, especially the art and efficacy of prayer; Vishnu is a form of the sun-god, who as Surya or Savitri, moved like a beneficent and radiant spirit across the face of the sky; and Siva is the survivor of the ancient storm-gods, who swept from their homes in the Himalayas with destructive force down upon the plains. These do not represent one religion, but distinct religions, or, rather, many different religions, each with its own customs, festivals, modes, and objects of worship, and even geographical distribution. Then, the Brahma (neuter), in whom they are co-ordinated, is the universal substance or soul; of him or it, all phenomenal being is a manifestation. He is no conscious reason, no home of ethical relations and distinctions, but only the ultimate essence or basis of all things. Every god and every man and every creature is in him as much as the sacred triad, and in all he appears or becomes incarnate. In other words, the system is a polytheistic and mythological pantheism. But the Christian idea is the opposite of all this. God is personal, conscious, ethical; the Godhead expresses this personal, conscious, and ethical being as immanent and essential. Man cannot be absorbed into God, or God individualised and distributed in man. The Persons in the Godhead are incapable of absorption into more abstract forms of being; they represent God, not as an ever-unfolding and enfolding substance, but as a necessary and eternal communion, the home of life and love.'

In the Hindū doctrine of *avatāras*, or descents, which has exercised a far more popular and powerful influence than that of the *Trimūrtti*, we have a closer approach to Christianity. It is this conception of a God incarnate that has really moulded Hindū character and won the devotion of Hindū hearts, though as seen unfolded in all the gross crudities and often obscene drapery of Hindū romance, and as such inconsistent with the Brāhmanic idea of Divine perfection, the doctrine has had no moral force to raise the people out of their increasing degradation. Nevertheless, mythology is the region of religious ideas. Myth is not arbitrarily invented, but was man's early way of thinking about God, and God's way of

approaching man. A real longing of human nature, and not mere fancy, is represented in the old legends and romances of Hindūism; for the peculiarity of the system of *avatāras* consists, as Weber considers, in the fact that it is out of compassion for the suffering that the god becomes man and leads a human life. The doctrine responds to a deep heart-cry of the people for a religion of faith in a *personal* God, for a God sympathizing with humanity. It expresses the desire for a Divine deliverer amid the evils and miseries of life. The fabulous thus foreshadows the real; the legendary deliverer prefigures the historical Deliverer to come. Superstition is the flickering shadow cast by a real light, an unregulated faith in what human nature feels to be a reality, but fails to grasp. Both in Hindū and classical mythology we have thus anticipations and forecastings of some of the sublimest facts of the Christian revelation, and faith in the former is in some sense a preparation for faith in the latter. The belief that the gods can and do come down to men in their extremity contains a promise of redemption.

But when we compare the belief with the crowning truth of Christianity, we perceive at once its crude defects, and how Christ not only fulfils the unconscious prophecy, but sweeps away the conjectures and conceits, reconciles and unites isolated and opposing truths, and proclaims an altogether original message that goes forth with regenerating power. Both East and West sought to realise the idea of the unity of the Divine and human; but while the Hindū, in conceiving of God condescending to man, and assuming a human form, so far resembles the Christian, the conception itself is radically different. Not only is one image noble and the other mean—for it is presented in its fullest form in the Krishna legend—the one rich and the other comparatively empty; not only may the deity assume

in Hindūism the form of an animal equally with that of a man, and become equally individualized in every created thing; not only are the incarnations of Vishnu diverse and numerous, thereby affording no true conception of the essential and complete unity of God and man; but *portions only* of the Divine essence are united to created beings, whereas in Christ the Divine Spirit was united to universal man, a communication, not merely of qualities, but of the essential nature. 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.[1] In the same way, the whole nature of man is not in Hindūism taken up into Deity, as it is in Christ, redeemed and glorified and made for ever one with the Divine; but when Vishnu returns to his heaven he lays aside his human nature. Divine manhood is therefore apparent only, not real; and we arrive at the underlying conception of Hindū thought, the fixed antagonism between body and soul, flesh and spirit, and that man's highest stage is reached only when his individuality is lost in absorption in the Divine. The distinctive and underived declaration of Christianity is the central fact of the *Divine Man*, 'the Word made flesh,' that God in Christ enters into man, revealing both the Divinity of man and the humanity of God. No previous philosophy or religion possessed the materials for formulating such a truth; it stands unique in the history of the world.

The third main division of Hindū thought is *modern Hindūism*, or the Puranic, dating, approximately, from the eighth to the beginning of the present century, and is Brāhmanism run to seed, as practised by the two great sects of Vaishnavas and Saivas. These take as their special Bible the eighteen[2] Purānas ('ancient tradition'),

[1] Col. ii. 9.

[2] They are divided into three groups of six, according to the number

which are erroneously regarded by the sects as of great antiquity, but were evidently composed by the Brāhmans to correct the influence of the heterodox literature of the Buddhists, and are, accordingly, closely allied with the epics. They abound in old traditional stories of the gods, in fanciful mythologies, theogonies, and cosmogonies, purporting to give a history of the universe from its origin, and are designed to convey the exoteric doctrines of the Veda to the lower castes and to women, who had begun to possess some privileges under Buddhism, and, indeed, form the Veda proper of popular polytheistic and yet pantheistic Hindūism. This was pre-eminently the sectarian period of the religion of the Hindūs, when strifes arose between the followers of Vishnu and Siva for the purpose of exalting one deity or the other to the highest position. Vaishnavism has undoubtedly succeeded in being the dominant faith, aided by such powerful apostles and reformers [1] as Rāmānuja, a native of Southern India, who lived in the twelfth century, Rāmānanda at the end of the fourteenth, and Chaitanya, of Bengal, at the beginning of the sixteenth, an ecstatic devotee of Krishna. Faith in personal deities, which is the *Bhakti-mārga* ('way of faith'), is expressed in the more humane form of Vaishnavism, while belief in the efficacy of works, penances, and austerities, which is the *Karma-mārga* ('way of works'), is expressed in the sterner form of Saivism; the highest or philosophical way of salvation, the method of the Upanishads, being the *Jnāna-mārga*, or 'way of knowledge.' Purānic Vaish-

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of the chief gods; though the six that exult the praises of Brahmā are mainly concerned with the worship of the other two, preference being given to Vishnu.

[1] For an account of founders of sects and sectarian differences, see Wilson's 'Religious Sects of the Hindūs.'

navism presents a full development of the Krishna-cult,[1] which portrays the youthful freaks and *lilās* of the deity in a manner now condemned by the more enlightened minds, who interpret them in an allegoric or esoteric way.

Connected with the Purānic literature and ritual are the *Tantras*, which represent a phase of degenerate Saivism, and by means of obscene orgistic rites inculcate the worship of the active, energizing principle (*Sakti*) of the deity, personified as his consort, and abound in extravagant symbolism, mysticism, and magic. Vishnu, Siva, and Sakti worship—*i.e.*, the worship of the two male gods presiding over creation, preservation, and disintegration—and the worship of the corresponding female counterparts, constitute the staple of ordinary Hindūism. In Tāntrism or Saktism—though even this is claimed to have an esoteric side—Hindūism arrived at its worst stage of mediæval and modern development.

We thus see that the stream of Hindūism in its onward course, while it has gathered volume and force, has drawn in from surrounding tracts many foreign elements and impurities, so that its more thoughtful votaries fail to see reflected in its present surface their ancient truths. With marvellous power of compromise and assimilation and with an ever-underlying pantheism, Hindūism has been able to be all-embracing, and to easily adapt itself by mysticism and symbol to varying minds. Unrestrained by the limits of a historical revelation, natural perversions and fancies have had full play, till the great system has been paralysed by accumulated extravagances and corruptions. With no organic connection of lesser truths with a greater, disconnected truths become half-truths; particular truths, being over-insisted on, grow monstrous; and, all possible

[1] As expounded in the Vishnu, the Bhāgavat, and the Brāhma-vaivartta Purānas.

ideas being exhausted, the truths themselves either die of spiritual starvation or change into falsehoods. The circle of failure thus becomes complete.

Start from God as the Bible does, and all goes right; start from Nature, and interpret God and man through Nature, and all goes wrong. From whatever side we look, the non-Christian world has the universe for its principle; and it cannot become free from it, just as in the Sphinx (which mystical figure fitly expresses heathenism) the human countenance rises out of the body of an animal, from which it cannot separate itself. Surely our world presents no aspect more pathetic and profound than this natural history of the human consciousness, this dim groping of man after God.

If we ask why God allowed the world thus to wander on for ages in its own way; was it not because He would let men see what they were capable of accomplishing by their own power? The kingdom of this world must be revealed in full. It must exhaust all its possibilities, must work out and fill its pantheon, must spin out its finely-drawn, philosophical speculations, in order that the revelation of redeeming love might shine forth in all its glory. The world must accomplish its own revelation, 'so as fully to display itself in all its glory and in all its worthlessness, in all its glitter and in all its emptiness.' Men must work first their own methods; only amid their wrecks will they open their heart to understand the Divine.

CHAPTER IV

VEDIC LITERATURE

Vedic Literature—Oral Transmission of Hymns—Animistic Survivals —Vedic Divinities: Indra, Agni, Varuna—Anthropomorphic Conceptions—Struggle after Unity—Henotheism and Pantheism —Notions of Creation—Sacrificial System—Faith—No Divine Promises in the Vedas—Belief in a Future State—The *Fons et Origo* of Hindū Theology—Contrasted with Revealed Religion.

In the sacred books of the East, we watch, Professor Max Müller says,[1] 'the dawn of the religious consciousness of man—one of the most inspiring and hallowing sights in the whole history of the world,' yet 'not without its dark clouds, its chilling colds, its noxious vapours.' Indeed, these constitute, he adds, 'the real toil and travail of the human heart in its first religious aspirations,' which gave birth to 'the intensity of its triumphs and its joys.' The Vedas form the fountain-source of Hindū religious thought, and reveal to us the living features of a bygone—well-nigh prehistoric—existence, whose centuries seem to belong to another planet. In Vedic times no expression was in current use by which any year but the present was distinguishable from any other year; and any attempt to compute the age and duration of the Veda has been

[1] 'The Upanishads,' vol. i., Preface, p. xi.

compared to watching the gradual and imperceptible changes that have taken place in the course of centuries in the starry heavens. Pictures of a people's life, of Nature's life, and of soul-life pass before us, but there is no history in the ordinary sense, no succession of events clearly united with one another. The life of those strange Vedic tribes is more like an 'incoherent mass of chance occurrences,' unrelieved by any commanding personalities, undisturbed by any great national struggles, in which no conscious national purpose can be traced, no fixed guidance, as in the case of the Israelites.

Vedic literature, originally contained in texts of remote antiquity, has been preserved to the world in numerous and comparatively modern manuscripts, the most important of which do not date earlier than 1600 A.D. In the Vedic age, writing—probably introduced into India by the Phœnicians—was unknown. As late as about 400 B.C. —of which time we have some definite information in the Church life of the Buddhists—no manuscripts or writing utensils are found in the dwellings of the monks. Writing was then used simply in business matters, not for making books. The oldest known inscriptions in India are those of Asoka, and may be placed about 250 B.C. The most remarkable feat in the literary history of the world is thus connected with the hymns of the Rig-veda, which number over one thousand, and which were composed, collected, recited, and transmitted without the art of writing, an art which, as applied to the sacred Scripture, was regarded with dread.[1] Every possible care was taken in transmission, every syllable was pronounced in a prescribed way; but,

[1] This may call to mind the traditional instruction of the Jewish 'Torah,' the living word in the mouth of the prophets; and it is noteworthy that among Eastern nations generally books have never been the basis of sound knowledge. Oral teaching is the ideal of instruction, and the highest truths can be properly enshrined only in a faithful

through lapses of memory or attempts of remodelling, disfigurements and changes necessarily crept in, while the substitution, in course of time, of modern for ancient and obsolete terms destroyed many valuable archaic remains, just as a hard, grammatical analysis has since violated much of the real meaning that lay hidden under the old forms. From about 400 B.C. these corruptions ceased,[1] so that for considerably upwards of 2,000 years the fragments of the Rig-veda have been protected from decay. Its publication was first undertaken in 1845 by Professor Max Müller, at the suggestion of Burnouf, together with the commentary of its Hindū expounder, Sayana, who lived some 500 years before.

The religion embodied in the literature of the Veda stands at the head of India's ancient beliefs, and is closely related, not only to that of the other branch of the Āryans proper—the Persians—but to the religion of the Indo-Germans generally; though the Hindūs—who, after their separation from the Iranians, settled at the mouths of the Indus in the land of the five rivers (now the Panjāb)—set forth in a path peculiarly their own. The gods common to all were the 'shining ones,' the *Devas* (θεός, *deus*), conceived as children of the 'heaven-father,' *Dyaus-pitar* (Ζεὺς πατήρ, *Jupiter*), and *Prithivī*, the earth-goddess. The sun-god was *Sūrya* (Ἥλιος, *Sol*); another heaven-god was Varuna (Οὐρανός); and the dawn-goddesses were *Ushas* (Ἠώς, *Aurora*); while *Indra*, whose might exceeds the heaven and who slays the cloud-serpent with his thunder-

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disciple's memory and heart. But such a system, while having its ultimate ideal and fulfilment in the 'Word of God' dwelling in the heart, has its inevitable defects.

[1] Through the efforts of a Hindū grammarian, Cannaka, who made a survey of the vocal peculiarities of the Rig-veda text. (See Oldenberg's 'Ancient India,' p. 25.)

bolt, is the same god as Thor, the dragon-fighter and hammer-hurler of the Scandinavian Edda.[1]

The guide to the entire theogony of the Hindūs lies in the Veda, where we have clearly depicted the primitive views and expressions of man upon the powers and processes of Nature, especially in the alternations of dawn and darkness, and in the phenomena of storm and thunder, and running back into still earlier and prehistoric stages of religious thought. For alike in the Homeric and the Vedic cult there are survivals of a previous savage period, of an earlier animistic conception, when no distinction between the human and the bestial existed; when, in the doctrine of spirits and worship of ancestors, and in the childishness of the ideas generally, the elements of the lowest state of religious evolution all the world over were essentially the same. In speaking of sun, moon, and stars, of storms and seasons, the language in which early polytheistic tendencies are clothed is obviously rooted in more primitive modes of thought, and has all the air of a growth rather than a reminiscence, of a development, not a degradation. In the earliest religious literature and popular folklore there are embedded fossil fragments of still earlier and cruder mythological formations, which evidently preceded the purer forms of the great historic religions. On this theory alone is it possible to explain the mass of irrational and contradictory facts embedded in the literature of a civilized and intellectual people such as the Ancient Indian Āryans.

The Vedic divinities—the personification of natural

[1] 'The earliest theologies have been astronomical. The European and classical names for God go back to the old Sanskrit word for the sunrise. Stonehenge is a temple of the sun, and our leading ecclesiastic festivals of to-day are baptized survivals of customs existing in the dawn of history, which had their origin in observed movements of the heavens.' ('J. B.' in the *Christian World*, January 26, 1899.

forces—when exalted to a superhuman magnitude, whose dwelling-place is the atmosphere or the heavens, still retain marks of an earlier animistic form, as when Agni, the fleet god of fire, is represented by a steed, and Indra, the powerful one, by an ox; and the Hindū Olympus, mostly beneficent, is encircled by an imaginary world of subordinate and sphinx-like deities, animal demons, malicious spirits (*rākshas*[1]), and the souls of the dead, both kindly and inimical; and where the sorcerer and magicians exercise the spells and powers afterwards held by the priest. The polytheistic, and almost fetish, character of some of the earliest songs is unmistakable. The Rig-veda in some places says that there are 33 deities,[2] of which 11 are in heaven, 11 on earth, and 11 in the watery sphere; elsewhere it states that there are 3,339 deities.[3] Indeed, every natural object, and especially every useful thing, would seem to have been adored as a deity, such as pebbles and mortars,[4] carriages and their different parts,[5] all implements of war,[6] animals,[7] plants,[8] sacrifices,[9] food,[10] butter,[11] and the intoxicating soma-juice.[12] Special prominence was given to the drink of immortality[13] (*soma*, *haoma*) at sacrifices, and to the worship of fire, and the ideas and customs, both Persian and Indian connected with them have suggested a non-Āryan origin.

These old priestly songs were composed at a time when not a single city existed in India, only hamlets and castles, and during a period of conflict between the 'fair-skinned' immigrants, the Indo-Āryans, and the 'dark

[1] Rig-veda, i. 135, 5; comp. Atharva, v. i. 16, 3.
[2] R.V. i. 34, 11; i. 45, 2; viii. 28, 1; ix. 92, 4.
[3] iii. 9, 9. [4] i. 28. [5] vi. 47; iii. 53. [6] vi. 75.
[7] vi. 28; iv. 27; vii. 103. [8] x. 97. [9] i. 162, 163; x. 96.
[10] i. 187. [11] iv. 58. [12] i. 91.
[13] Almost all the 114 hymns of the ninth book of the Rig-veda are addressed to Soma.

people,' the aborigines of the country. The hymns, no doubt, led the aggressors on to victory, and with the growth of society, and as the character of peace and war came to be better understood, new ideas arose. Gradually, as man began to feel himself superior to the brute, the animal and the ghostly gave way to the human quality, and the great powers of Nature emerge in figures of divinities that assume human and superhuman dignity, while, in the place of the old sorceries, the gods are approached with gifts, invited to the meal of a primitive worship, and solicited by sacrifice and prayer. The Devas, originally nothing more than the phenomena and powers of the shining heaven, are no longer simple elemental forces, but become transformed into 'immortal masters,' raised above Nature as creators and governors of the world, interested in the affairs of human life, and arbiters of its destinies.

Anthropomorphic divinities and material sacrifices sum up the Vedic cult, and in both we have the remains of earlier crude conceptions. 'The Vedic divinities, the Vedic sacrifices,' says Oldenberg, 'are not primitive and transparent products of the original creative force of religion, but, for the most part, turn out, on close scrutinization, to be ancient, obscure, and complex creations.' [1] In the original myth of Indra he appears as the thunderer surrounded by the Maruts, or storm-gods, led by Rudra, or he is united with Vishnu, the god of the solar disc—the two gods destined to supersede him in later Hindūism—and he sets free with his lightning dart the rain-storm from the cloud-cliff. In the Vedic hymns he becomes the dexterous and the victorious hero and the bestower of boundless gifts.

He is described as the generator of heaven and earth.[2] 'He propped up the vast sky in empty space.'[3] 'He who fixed the quivering earth,

[1] 'Ancient India,' p. 59. [2] R.V. vii. 36, 4. [3] ii. 15, 2.

and gave stability to the agitated mountains, who meted out the vast atmosphere, he, O men, is Indra.'[1] 'Gracious are thy hands, O Indra, beneficent thy palms, bestowers of wealth upon thy worshippers.'[2] His qualities, however, are very mixed. He controls the destinies of men at his pleasure and acts arbitrarily.[3] He abandons his friendships with former favourites and consorts with others in turn. Indra, the soma-drinker, is not the relation or friend or kinsman of the man who offers no oblations; he is the slayer of the prostrated, undevout man. And yet he is 'the most fatherly of all fathers.'[4] Similarly, Agni (*ignis*), the fire-god, is sometimes spoken of as 'consuming and blackening the woods with his tongue, or roaring like the waves of the sea, as having clarified butter for his food and smoke for his mark'; and, again, he is invoked to be 'easy of approach, even as a father to his son.' He is the special god of the priests, the mediator between men and gods (*purohita*), the lord of spells (*brahmanaspati*), the lord of prayer (*brihaspati*), the 'guest of the sacrifice.'

So also Varuna, originally a lunar divinity, the chief of the *Ādityas*, sons of the goddess of the twilight, while still regarded as the ruler of the night, figures rather as a divine lord, and stands out among the Vedic deities as the possessor of moral qualities, like Ormuzd in the religion of Zoroaster, and especially as the detector and punisher of sin, whose dreadful anger the sinner endeavours to appease by prayers and sacrifices.

He is spoken of as a universal monarch.[5] He knows the flight of birds in the air, the path of ships on the ocean, the course of the far-travelling wind, and beholds all secrets that have been, or shall be, done.[6] Though he is said to be gracious even to him who has committed sin,[7] and is the wise guardian of immortality,[8] he is far from being a benevolent ruler. His 'nooses stand spread out to catch the man who tells a lie';[9] he pardons only when appeased, and threatens the guilty with death. 'What offering will he deign to accept without showing anger?' is the prevailing feeling of the suppliant. 'What

[1] R.V. ii. 12, 2 (*cf.* Ps. civ.). [2] iv. 21, 9. [3] vi. 47, 15 *et seq.*

[4] iv. 17, 17 (*cf.* Ps. ciii. 13). The citations are from translations given in Muir's 'Original Sanskrit Texts.'

[5] R.V. i. 25, 10. [6] i. 25, 7, 9, 11 (*cf.* Ps. cxxxix.).

[7] vii. 87, 7. [8] vii. 42, 2. [9] iv. 16, 6.

great sin was it, Varuna, for which thou seekest to slay thy worshipper and friend? Tell me, O unassailable and self-dependent God; and, freed from sin, I shall speedily resort to thee with adoration. Release us from the offences of our fathers, and from those which we have committed in our own persons.'[1]

The deep sense of sin and the idea of suffering for the sins of others is very marked, also the conception of the transference of guilt.

'If, gods, we have committed against you any grievous offence with our tongues, or through thoughtlessness, transfer that sin to the enemy who seeks to wrong us.'[2]

And here is one of the most striking prayers for mercy:

'Let me not, O King Varuna, go to the home of earth. Be gracious, O mighty God, be gracious. When, O thunderer, I go along, quivering like an inflated skin, be gracious. I have, from lack of understanding, done what is contrary to thy will; be gracious. Whatever offence this be, O Varuna, that we as men commit against the gods, in whatever way we have infringed thy ordinances through thoughtlessness, do not seek to harm us for that transgression.'[3]

It will thus be seen that at the point of Vedic evolution the deities lose much of their purely physical character and become rather magnified men, though fortified for heroic exploits by food and wine, rejoicing in slaughtered oxen and in the intoxicating soma. They are remarkable for Titanic power rather than for Grecian beauty, and, what is of more importance, divinity and goodness are not necessarily connected, as in the Old Testament; the worshipper is satisfied if his deity is strong and pliable, open to flattery, and the distributor of earthly good,[4] rain

[1] R.V. vii. 86, 3. [2] x. 37, 12. [3] vii. 89, 1.

[4] In i. 29, a hymn addressed to Indra—the 'voracious drinker of the soma-juice'—he is repeatedly asked to enrich the worshippers *with thousands of excellent cows and horses;* and this spirit pervades the majority of the hymns.

and crops, and a long life; if he can be rich in cattle and happy in children.

A further idea of deity, which evinces progress in thought, is applied to the chief gods, so that *each in turn is honoured by the worshippers as the highest*. The co-existence of a plurality of deities, as recognised in the older portions of the hymns, is altogether inconsistent with any clear apprehension of the unity of the godhead; but the ascription of universal dominion to several of the gods in turn has been pointed out by Professor Max Müller, to which he gives the name of 'henotheism,' or the worship of single gods. 'In the Veda one god after another is invoked. For the time being all that can be said of a divine being is ascribed to him. The poet while addressing him seems hardly to know of any other gods.'[1] The epithets of *Visvakarman*, the 'maker of the universe,' or 'the all-fashioner,' and *Prajāpati*, 'lord of all creatures,' are given to different deities. At the same time, there are several pantheistic verses:

> 'Aditi is the sky; Aditi is the air; Aditi is mother, and father, and son; Aditi is all the gods and the five classes of men; Aditi is whatever has been born; Aditi is whatever shall be born.'[2]

And, again:

> 'Purusha himself is this whole universe, whatever has been, and whatever shall be. He is also the lord of immortality, which grows by food. All existing things are a quarter of him, and that which is imperishable in the sky is three-quarters of him.'[3]

The belief that God is *one*, in the theistic sense, the sublime conception of the Hebrew people, grows with the consciousness of a national life, which was very feebly developed in the ancient Āryans. Jehovah, in the Old

[1] 'Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion' (1882), p. 277.

[2] R.V. i. 89, 10. A-diti = the unbound, the endless expanse beyond the sky, the visible infinite.

[3] R.V. x. 90.

Testament, is the sole leader of His people, fighting their battles, ordering their polity, and controlling their destiny; and common misfortunes and successes kindle a patriotic passion that finds its rallying-point and centre in a theocracy. The several and separate Vedic bards were strangers to this historical and corporate sentiment, and unconscious of a divine and well-planned leading, while they had not, on the other hand, reached that stage of philosophic reflection which conceives more abstract divine figures, and seeks for unity in manifold phenomena, the One in the many. Nevertheless, underlying all the polytheism or henotheism, there would seem to be, here and there, a glimmering perception of monotheism, a struggling after unity; for it is quite evident that, while certain portions of the Rig-veda read like ordinary idyllic poetry, yet behind the finite phenomena of sense perception there is something supernatural and infinite that filled the old rishis with reverence and awe. Observing, also, that different gods had many attributes in common, they suspected that their underlying essence was the same, and so recognised a certain oneness, though manifested in a multiplicity of forms. 'They call him (the sun) Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and (he is) the celestial and well-winged Garutmāt. *Sages name variously that which is but one;* they call it Agni, Yama, Mātarisvan'[1]—a verse that modern Vedāntists cite as the origin and basis of their monistic philosophy. Professor Max Müller[2] and Sir M. Monier Williams[3] see also in the following hymn an instinctive monotheism:

'Hiranyagarbha (the 'golden embryo') arose in the beginning; as soon as born he was the sole lord of things existing. He established the earth and this heaven. To what god shall we offer our oblation?

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[1] R.V. i. 164, 46. [2] 'Hist. Anc. Sans. Lit.,' p. 568.
[3] 'Indian Wisdom,' p. 23.

He who gives breath, who gives strength, whose command all, and the gods, too, reverence, whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow is death;—to what god shall we offer our oblation? Who by his might became the sole king of the breathing and winking world, who rules over this two-footed and four-footed (creation); —to what god, etc. Whose greatness these snowy mountains and the ocean, with the river, declare, of whom these (different) quarters of the sky are the arms;—to what god, etc. By whom the sky is fiery and the earth firmly fixed, by whom the firmament and the heaven were established, who in the atmosphere is the measurer of the aerial space;—to what god, etc.' [1]

Such hymns tell us something of the *Vedic notions of creation*, for the cosmogony of the Vedas is not one connected narrative, like that of the Bible, but appears in guesses and speculations, in which, while there is considerable elevation of thought, there is yet no harmony, and not a little puerility. According to the above hymn, the primeval waters, referred to later in the hymn, generated a 'golden embryo, from which the creator took bodily form in order to transform chaos into cosmos, but whether the chaos was eternally self-existent or whether it was produced we are not told. Similar speculations, though more mystical and profound, and more nearly approaching the description in the Book of Genesis, appear in the following:

'There was then neither nonentity (*asad*) nor entity (*sad*); there was no atmosphere or sky above. What enveloped (all)? Where is the receptacle? Of what (was it contained)? Was it water, the profound abyss? Death was not then, nor immortality; there was no distinction of day nor night. That One breathed calmly, self-supported; there was nothing different from or above it. In the beginning darkness existed, enveloped in darkness. All this was undistinguishable water. That one which lay void and wrapped in nothingness was developed by the power of fervour. Desire first arose in it, which was the primal germ of wind, (and which) sages, searching with their intellect, have discovered in their heart to be the bond which unites entity with nonentity. The ray (or cord) which stretched across these (worlds?), was it beneath or was it above? There were there

[1] R.V. x. 121.

impregnating powers and mighty forces, a self-supporting principle beneath and energy above. *Who knows*, who here can declare, whence has sprung—*whence this creation?* The gods are subsequent to the development of this (universe); *who, then, knows whence it arose?* From what this creation arose, and *whether* (*anyone*) *made it or not*—he who in the highest heaven is its ruler, he verily knows, *or* (*even*) *he does not know*.'[1]

This hymn, in some respects the most striking and sublime of all, and presenting, perhaps, the nearest approach to monotheism to be found in the Vedas, sounds almost like an echo of the ancient traditions of the creation, but the pathetic doubt as to the 'how' and 'whence' and the relation between the creation and the highest ruler, and the possibility that even he may not be able to solve the problem, stand out in clearest contrast to the plain, emphatic statements of revealed truth: '*In the beginning God created* the heaven and the earth.'[2] 'He commanded, and they were created.'[3] 'By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear.'[4] '*In Him* (Christ) *were all things created*, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible. . . . All things have been created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.'[5]

Passing now from the deities to their worshippers, we observe that the whole of the religious life of Vedic times centres in *sacrifice*, combined with prayer and praise. 'The gods are propitiated and their vigour enhanced by prayer and praise.'[6] 'The adorable Agni is magnified by the hymns, the prayers, the praises of his worshippers.'[7] Sacrifice (*vajna*),

[1] R.V. x. 129. [2] Gen. i. 1. [3] Ps. cxlviii. 5.
[4] Heb. xi. 3. [5] Col. i. 16, 17. [6] R.V. viii. 12, 19, 22.
[7] iii. 5, 2.

simple at first, highly elaborate later on, must have preceded the prayers, since they were composed for its celebration. It is the one expression of mystery and worship, the symbol of the profoundest life, in which even the gods have a part. The world was made for the sake of sacrifice,[1] and sacrifice was one of the means by which the universe and gods and men were made. Purusha (the primeval male) is mystically sacrificed, and from the four parts of his body the four castes proceed and the several parts of the universe.[2] The gods themselves are merely mortals till they gain immortality by sacrifices and austerities. 'Sacrifice is the axle of the world's wheel, and the fecundating power of all things.'[3]

In outward appearance the Vedic sacrificial system is simplicity itself. Just as there are no images of the deities, so there are no temples for offerings. The open sward under the spreading heavens, the tender *kusa* grass, suffice for the altars of wandering shepherd tribes, at which the head of each family officiates, the most primitive sacrifices consisting of meat offerings, animal offerings, and *soma* offerings, the materials required being of the simplest—rice, clarified butter, water, and a log of wood. The characteristic idea was that of a kind of bargain with the gods. 'Man needs things which the god possesses, such as rain, light, warmth, and health, while the god is hungry and seeks offerings from man ; there is giving and receiving on both sides.'[4] The feeling of kinship and communion between the gods and their worshippers was thus established.

Gradually, however, the proper performance of the sacrifices and prayers developed into an elaborate and burdensome ritual, which, with its minute formulæ, hidden mysticism, and occult powers, could be mastered only by

[1] R.V. vii. 99, 4. [2] x. 90. [3] i. 164, 34, 5.

[4] Barth's 'Religions of India,' p. 36.

a trained and hereditary priesthood, and so the poetical nature-worship of the primitive Indo-Āryans stiffened into a dry creed of sacrifices and penances, which is preserved to us in the liturgical treatises known as the *Brāhmanas* of the Vedas. The Vedic religion gives birth to Brāhmanism, as a great religious system; though the word 'Brāhman,' from the neuter of *brahma*,[1] a prayer or hymn, seems to have been in early times a synonym for *rishi*, and probably meant simply a 'singer of sacred songs.' Later on it came to denote a religious functionary, and the Brāhmans became the sole transmitters of the Vedic hymns, the trustees of the religious welfare of the other castes, the exclusive guardians and interpreters of revelation and tradition, and the recognised officiators at the sacrifices.

The public performance of these more important and imposing sacrifices, of which there were four—the *rājasūya*, or consecration of a king; the *asvamedha*, or horse-sacrifice; the *purusha-medha*, or human sacrifice; and the *sarvamedha*, or general sacrifice—became a vast religious machinery,[2] set in motion by material wealth, for the attainment, mainly, of temporal interests, in which the extravagances and black arts of sorcery and fanaticism, the survival of earlier savage customs, still played no little part. And though the sacrificial victim, when consigned to the fire, was said to be the 'annulment of sins,' these were for the most part ceremonial, and there was no necessary connection between the outward act and the inner life, no index of that spiritual devotion which ennobles and purifies the character and

[1] This word well illustrates the course of Hindū thought from the more concrete to the abstract, signifying originally in the Rig-veda simply the act of devotion, having in the oldest Brāhmanas the sense of holiness in general in prayer and sacrifice, while becoming in the Upanishads the holy principle animating Nature.

[2] See on this subject Haug's 'Aitareya Brāhmana,' vol. i., pp. 73, 7

makes for righteousness. Experimental religion was unknown. Fire burnt up, and water washed away, the obnoxious thing. There is no evidence that the thoughts and aspirations of the worshippers went beyond the figure to any spiritual fact. Their whole religion was a reading of Nature, through which they interpreted themselves, and of which they formed a part. Natural elements, therefore, sufficed for the putting away of ceremonial defilement, whereas to us the fire and water were but primitive material symbols that pointed forward, like Jewish rites, to the great Interpreter of Nature, to the consuming and purifying spirit of the Christian faith.

It is true that in the Rig-veda, and perhaps still more in the Brāhmanas, much importance is attached to the worshipper's state of mind, and that *faith* in the gods and devotion to their services are represented as the necessary conditions of enjoying their favour and obtaining the blessings which they are able to confer. One of the hymns[1] is addressed to *Sraddhā* (Faith), and begins thus:

'Through faith the fire is kindled; through faith the oblation is well offered; with our words we proclaim faith (to be) upon the head of good fortune. O faith, make this which I utter acceptable to him who gives, and to him who desires to give, and to liberal worshippers.'

And again:

'Men have faith in the fiery Indra when he hurls again and again his destroying thunderbolt.'[2] 'Do not, O Indra, destroy our valued enjoyment; we have put faith in thy great power. I verily believe that faith has been reposed in thee; do thou, who art vigorous, advance us to great wealth.'[3] 'Do ye, O Agni and Soma, regard the acts of the man who worships you with an oblation, with a mind

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[1] R.V. x. 151. [2] i. 55, 5. [3] i. 104, 6.

directed to the gods, and with butter.'[1] 'The self-dependent god provides with opulence that man who loves the gods and does not withhold his wealth.'[2]

It will be observed, however, that the faith and devotion here referred to and exercised, while they are directed to unseen powers, move entirely in a lower sphere. Such acts are pleasing to the gods, and will be rewarded by material good. And though we have in such faith one of the characteristic marks of revealed religion, in that it secures the acceptable approach of the worshipper to his God, there is no sign of any personal religious fellowship and spiritual delight, of any such experiences as those of the ancient Israelite who found Jehovah and rejoiced before Him, and whose eager thirst for participation in the services of His sanctuary is expressed in Psalms like the forty-second: 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?' And what is the explanation? An essential mark of a religion of revelation is that the devotional spirit seeks access to God in acts and services to which *He has attached a definite promise.* An eminent Biblical scholar has observed: 'The very foundation of revealed religion is the truth that man does not first seek and find God, but that God in His gracious condescension *seeks out man*, and gives him such an approach to Himself as man could not enjoy without the antecedent act of Divine self-communication.'[3]

Here, then, we have a simple and striking fact, note-worthy in the present day of Hindū revival, when the statement is often heard that all the important truths of the Bible are to be found in the Vedas. There is this

[1] R.V. i. 93, 8. [2] x. 42, 9.

[3] Dr. W. Robertson Smith in 'The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' p. 238.

remarkable difference between the two: there are *no Divine promises* in the Vedas. The two literatures may inculcate similar virtues, they may disclose like needs and aspirations, the same travail of the soul as it bears the burdens of existence; and the Vedas may contain many beautiful prayers for mercy and help; but we fail to find a single text that purports to be a Divine *answer* to prayer, an expression of experienced peace and delight in God, as the result of assured pardon and reconciliation. In a fine hymn addressed to Varuna, the poet offers honey, which the god is sure to like, and then appeals to him as a friend, and says: 'Now I saw the god who is all visible; now I beheld his chariot above the earth; *he must have accepted my prayers*.' That is the nearest approach to an answered prayer to be found in the Vedas, and it is merely the expression of a hope. 'He must have accepted my prayers,' says the Vedic poet. 'And it shall come to pass that, *before they call*, *I will answer*; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear,' says the Hebrew prophet.[1] There is the belief in the Vedas that the gods are able to take away the burden of sin, but no attempt to explain how they can do it. Faith does not hear the voice of the god speaking to the soul; it does not bring him near. The Bible, on the other hand, is the book of Divine promises. They are definite and numberless, and the forgiveness of sins is its express characteristic. In no other religious literature are there to be found words like these: 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'[2] 'I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.'[3]

A careful comparison of religions thus brings out this

[1] Isa. lxv. 24. [2] Isa. i. 18. [3] Isa. xliii. 25.

striking contrast between the Bible and all other sacred scriptures. It establishes its *satisfying* character in distinction from the *seeking* spirit of other faiths. The Bible, as the depository of revealed religion, shows God in quest of man rather than man in quest of God. In place of the fear of those whose energies are paralysed by fruitless acts and ceremonies to obtain forgiveness, we have its explicit promise to forgive the sin and to remove the burden. It thus satisfies the spiritual hunger and thirst to which other religions only give expression; it meets, as we shall further see, the questions raised in the philosophies of the East, and supplies their only true solution. All human speculations and conceptions, so far as they are true, find place under its shadow, and yet there is room.

This is the case with the belief in immortality, which appears in the earliest Vedic hymns, and becomes more elaborated in the Brāhmanas, a belief which, according to Burnouf, 'was never interrupted for a moment in India.'[1] It is found in close connection with the memory of the Pitris, or ancestral fathers of the worshippers, who are recognised as still existing, and are invoked for succour.[2] Yama, the Indian Pluto, was

> 'the first that found out for us a way. This home is not to be taken from us—(the place) whither our ancient fathers have departed along their own paths, knowing (the way) thither.'[3]

The following words were addressed to the departed at the time of their obsequies:

> 'Depart thou, depart by the ancient paths to the place whither our ancient fathers have departed: (there) shalt thou see the two kings, Yama and the god Varuna, exhilarated by the oblation. Meet in the

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[1] It manifests itself still in the *Srāddha* ceremony, or offering to a father's spirit, a duty incumbent on every Hindū son.

[2] R.V. x. [3] x. 14, 2.

highest heaven with the fathers, meet with Yama, meet with (the recompense of) thy sacrificial and pious acts. Throwing off all imperfection, again go to thy home. Radiant, become united to a body.' [1]

And again :

'In heaven, where our virtuous friends enjoy blessedness, having left behind them the infirmities of their bodies, free from lameness or distortion of their limbs, may we behold our parents and our children.' [2]

The gods are regarded as immortal and capable of conferring immortality on their worshippers :

'May I attain to that beloved abode of his (of Vishnu), where men devoted to the gods rejoice.' [3] 'The liberal man abides placed on the summit of the sky ; he goes to the gods.' [4] 'Place me, O purified Soma, in that imperishable and undecaying world where perpetual light (exists) and the sun is placed. Make me immortal (in the realm) where King Yama dwells, where is the sanctuary of the sky, and those rushing waters flow. Make me immortal in the third heaven, where action is unrestrained and the regions are luminous. Make me immortal in the world of the sun, where there are pleasures and enjoyments, where ambrosia and satisfaction are found.' [5]

Such simple and beautiful aspirations, mixed with sense perception as they are, and uttered when the world was young, find an easy place in the Christian temple, where the instinctive longing for immortality is justified and satisfied, while its true spiritual nature is revealed.

There is no trace to be found in these ancient hymns beyond a stray reference in the tenth and last book, and of a much later date than the others, of the dogma of transmigration (which will be considered later), and which with the growth of priestism, soon became a fundamental conception of Hindū thought. Life wears a cheerful

[1] R.V. x. 14. 7 *et seq.* [2] A.V. vi. 120, 3. [3] R.V. i. 154, 5
[4] i. 125, 5. [5] ix. 113, 7 *et seq.*

aspect, and there is an eager desire for its continuance in another state. The idea, indeed, of the future life is that of a simple, pastoral people, and the pleasures in store are sensual rather than spiritual. The celestial region is no place of disembodied spirits and Homeric shades, but the bright abode of bodies purified by fire, though it often becomes a merry banqueting hall, where eating honey, quaffing the soma, and other festivities and revelries, are enjoyed. There was also a place of punishment for the wicked, a pit into which the irreligious are hurled, and where Indra casts those who offer no sacrifices.[1]

'Knowing, he beholds all creatures; he hurls the hated and irreligious into the abyss.'[2] 'Like brotherless females, unchaste, like evil women who hate their husbands, wicked, unrighteous, and liars, they are destined for that deep abyss.'[3]

Such, then, is the strange and living picture of religious life and thought in those far-back, measureless ages, where emerging from a prehistoric and animistic past, we have depicted man's primitive conceptions of the powers and processes of Nature, in the midst of the survivals of an imaginary realm of semi-deities and demons, evil spirits and departed souls, all set forth in a literature at once childish and irrational, and yet elevated and profound. And back to this obscure and complex source we surely trace all subsequent development in the theogony of the Hindūs. The great popular gods of mediæval and modern Hindūism, Vishnu and Siva, which, with their marvellous mythologies and doctrine of 'descents,' we have seen, created rival sects, moulded national character, and excited popular enthusiasm, melt away into physical powers of Nature, and are clearly traced up to the ancient sun and storm myths of the Vedic Sūrya and Rudra, both, again,

[1] R.V. i. 121, 13. [2] ix. 73, 8. [3] iv. 5, 5.

being connected with the original myth of Indra, the Indian Thor, the hurler of the thunderbolt; while Varuna, the most moral of the deities, was first of all a lunar divinity, a son of the goddess of the twilight. The *fons et origo* of Hindū theology was thus the shining Devas, who were *originally nothing more than the phenomena and powers of air and sky*, and gradually became transformed into anthropomorphic deities, who are fortified in their festive heavens for heroic deeds by food and wine liberally offered to them by their worshippers on earth. The beginnings of a pantheistic conception of the universe, which afterwards filled Indian thought, can also be traced. Some of the surnames of the ancient gods, especially of Agni, the god of fire, and regarded as the soul of all things, become endowed with a separate existence, or such a deity is exalted to be lord of the world; and as the Brāhmans acquired power, and placed themselves on a level with the Devas, their speculations ascended from such generalizations to Brahma, the magic power hidden in the Veda and in prayer, who in the Brāhmanas is regarded as the impersonal cause of the universe, and later on becomes personified in the masculine Brahmā, the first god of the Hindū Trimūrtti, an embodiment of the priestly idea, a deification of the Brāhman's art of sacrifice and prayer.

It is thus possible to trace the evolution of the Vedic and Brāhmanic deities, who appear, according to the exigencies of the time, as creations of the imagination. No supreme, commanding, personal, and moral God, such as is seen in the first verse of the Hebrew Bible, rises on the childhood of the Indian world, as One, above all, creating all, controlling all, and from the first revealing Himself to His creatures, in symbol, sacrifice, covenant, and law, as the sole Moral Ruler of the universe and Director of its destiny; continual Divine guidance taking

the place of divination. The Vedic rishis saw only Nature, of which they were a part, and *through which* they interpreted both themselves and the Divine. And so we have in their 'hymns before sunrise' crude and pathetic guesses at the origin and method of creation, fanciful cosmogonies, a sensual paradise, and, at the same time, inevitable drifting into pantheistic thought.

The religious practice of Vedic times is centred and summed up, as we have seen, in material sacrifices. At first a childlike and honest bargaining with the gods, which establishes a social comradeship between the two, though nothing approaching to spiritual communion; but later a vast, elaborate machinery of the priest, set in motion and maintained by wealth, for the securing of earthly good and the generation of occult and superhuman powers, which largely took the place of the spells and black arts of the sorceries and savageries of a still earlier time. Hymns, some of them of great beauty, were chanted, devout and tender prayers were offered; but there was no conscious response, no Divine answer and promise to assure and sustain the soul. Altars smoked, and victims were slain, and these were conceived as the all-essential elements of worship, a prodigality and slaughter that had no significance beyond the acts themselves, no explanation, fulfilment, and abolition, as with the Jewish system, in one great Antitype. Jehovah, unlike the gods of the nations, does not require material sacrifice, but only 'to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God.'[1] And the radical distinction of revealed religion lies in the Deity being such an one as to *make Himself personally known* to His people, and to demand of them a *life conformed to His spiritual character* as a righteous and forgiving God. The true basis of the forgiveness of the Bible lies not in man's offering, but in a

[1] Mic. vi. 8.

work of sovereign love; and while the Jewish ritual ever kept in view the necessary connection of love with justice, and pointed forward to the true atonement, it is God who, for His own sake, blots out transgression and does not remember sins[1]—a conception that never entered the minds of Vedic seers and priests, any more than did the correlative conception of a holy God, a holy priesthood, and a holy people, the fundamental ideas and purposes of true religion.

[1] Ps. xxv. 11; Isa. xliii. 25.

CHAPTER V

VEDISM AND HINDUISM

Division of Vedic Literature—Mantras—Brāhmanas—Upanishads—Idea of Revelation—Modern Hindūism based upon Vedism—Vedic Hindūism dead—Departments of Works and Knowledge—Recoil from Sacrificial Ritual—Refuge found in Philosophy—The Upanishads and the Veda proper mutually exclusive—What has become of the Ancient Rites?—Christ the Fulfiller of Sacrifices.

THE old Vedic religion is known to us, as we have seen, through the hymns of the Rig-veda—the Veda [1] *par excellence*. Besides this, there are three other sacrificial works: the *Sāma* or Chant Veda; the *Yajur*, or sacrificial-formula Veda, divided, after two rival schools, into the White and the Black; and the *Atharva*-veda, not recognised till later. Each of these Vedas had its *Sanhitā*, or collection of hymns, said to have been arranged by Vedavyāsa, their mythical compiler, and its different *Brāhmanas*—prose liturgical treatises for the guidance of the officiating priests—though a considerable period must have elapsed between the composition of the two; while still later, certain works called *Sūtras* ('threads'), which were strings of short, concise, sacrificial and legal guides, also formed an appendix to the Vedas. Further, appended to the

[1] Derived from the Sanskrit *vidh*, to know, and allied to εἴδω and *video*.

Brāhmanas, but compositions of a far more interesting and elevated character, are the *Upanishads*—philosophical and theological mystical treatises—that form the most highly-prized religious literature in India in the present day. Mantras, Brāhmanas, Upanishads—these constitute the three great divisions of the Veda, the utterances successively of poet, priest, and philosopher; and, as Dr. Fairbairn has said, priests cannot be philosophers, and no philosopher was ever a priest. All these were handed down orally, and different schools had their own text, both of hymns and Brāhmanas.

To the whole of this literature the term *Sruti*, or revelation, is applied, while all post-Vedic writings—scientific treatises, philosophical systems, law-books, epic poems, and Purānas — are regarded as *Smriti*, or tradition. Hindūism has here another important idea in common with the Bible, and one universally entertained—that of a Divine revelation, a Word of God, supposed to have been communicated directly to inspired sages — pre-eminently in the hymns—and according to a theory of inspiration [1] more extreme than that of any other religion in the world. Though there is little in the hymns themselves to warrant this belief, the authors occasionally speak of their productions as 'generated by the gods.' [2] The wish is expressed that a certain 'divine hymn may reach Indra, the King of the god-made prayer.' [3]

With this reverence for their ancient 'sacred knowledge,' it is not surprising that the Hindūs of to-day maintain that their religion is based upon Vedism. And devout Brāhmans still recite every morning the celebrated

[1] They are variously described as 'eternal,' the 'breath of Brahma,' the product of the elements, or derived from the mystical victim sacrificed at the creation.

[2] R.V. x. 61, 7; 88, 8.

[3] vii. 97, 3.

Gāyatrī prayer of the Rig-veda, the most sacred of all utterances: 'Let us meditate on that excellent glory of the divine vivifier' (Savatri, or Sun); 'may he illumine our understanding.'[1] The ten sacramental observances (*Samskāras*) of the higher castes—eight of which are concerned with birth and childhood—are still those of the Vedic system, and the ancient *Mantras*, or prayers, are used; while the leading tenets of the Upanishads, or the Vedānta, are said to be 'discernible in almost every phase of modern Hindūism.'[2] On the other hand, what we understand by Vedic Hindūism—the religion of the hymns—with the institutions with which it was incorporated, is practically dead. Ancient Brāhmanism, in its original sacrificial sense, has little religious significance, though it still furnishes the ideals of what is dimly apprehended and really held by all orthodox Hindūs in the present day. The old Vedic deities—Indra, Agni, Varuna, Soma, the Ushas, and the Maruts—are never heard of; the old Nature-worship and elaborate sacrificial rites are unknown; whereas temples, images, and pilgrimages, the fundamental doctrines of *Karma* and transmigration, together with pernicious social customs, such as the seclusion of women, infant marriages, enforced widowhood, and the gigantic system of caste, to say nothing of self-torture, infanticide, and *satī*—all unknown in Vedic times—have formed the staple of modern Hindūism.

There are two great departments of the Veda. The first is called *Karma-Kānda*, the department of works, which embraces both Mantras and Brāhmanas, and is followed by the vast majority of persons whose notion of religion is a laying up of merit by means of ceremonial prayers and sacrificial rites. The second is called *Jnāna-*

[1] R.V. iii. 62, 10.

[2] P. A. Bose in 'Hindū Civilization,' etc., p. 5.

Kānda, the department of knowledge, the theosophic portion of the Vedic revelation; and this is embraced by the Upanishads, and is intended for the select few who are alone capable of attaining the true doctrine. During the whole of the Brāhmana period—from about 800 B.C. to 500 B.C.—the need of propitiatory offerings remained a central doctrine of Brāhmanism. As the sense of ceremonial guilt deepened, the idea of expiation, based on substituted suffering, was developed; the victim, mystically identified with the sacrifice, becomes the ransom for sin. Sacrifice acquires a superhuman power with the gods, while the gods themselves become immortal by repeated sacrifices. Altars and priests abounded, and the land was drenched with blood. A recoil from such an overdone ritual, mechanical rather than moral and emotional, was inevitable. Various Brāhman and Kshatriya sages appeared, and subsequently the great reformer and free-thinker Buddha, and a refuge from ritual was found in philosophy. The elaborate sacrificial rites had formed the basis of Brāhmanic influence, and the development of a rationalistic Brāhmanism struck at the root of priestly ascendancy by shaking men's faith in the efficacy of the sacrifices, and by opening up in their stead the 'way of knowledge.'

The Brāhmanas [1] only satisfied the requirements of a time when a trifling theology ruled; and while being interesting for their archaic style and guesses at truth, their host of abstract deities and childish mysticism and magic [2] have led Professor Max Müller to observe:

[1] The more important are the Aitareya and Kaushītaki-brāhmana for the Rig-veda, the Taittirīya and Satapatha for the two Yajur-vedas, the Tāndya for the Sāma, and the Gopatha for the Atharva.

[2] The blood of the sacrificial horse was offered to the *rākshas*, evil spirits (Ait. Br., ii. 7), and basket-makers to the *pisaça*, devils (Tait. Br., iii. 4, 1, 5).

'The general character of these works is marked by shallow and insipid grandiloquence, by priestly conceits, and antiquarian pedantry. . . . These works deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the ravings of madmen. They will disclose to a thoughtful eye the ruins of faded grandeur, the memories of noble aspirations. But let us only try to translate these works into our own language, and we shall feel astonished that human language and human thought should ever have been used for such purposes.' [1]

The most important of the Upanishads belong to what are called Āranyakas, or forest-books, which form an appendix to the Brāhmanas, and, treating as they do of the release of the soul from metempsychosis, by means of a recognition of the oneness of its real nature with the great impersonal Self or Absolute, are so profound that they were required to be read in the solitude of forests by persons who, having performed all the duties of a student and a householder, retired from the world to end their days in abstract spiritual contemplation. The Upanishads are as far removed from the ancient poetry of the Veda as the Talmud is from the Old Testament and Sufiism is from the Qurān. They represent the results of the first plunge of the human mind into the depths of metaphysical speculation, and investigate such abstruse problems as the origin of the universe, the nature of Deity and of the human soul, and the relation of spirit and matter.

The etymology of the word is doubtful. It probably signifies *sitting down near* some one in order to listen or meditate and worship (*upa-ni-shad*); so that it would express the idea of a session or assembly of pupils sitting down at a respectful distance round their teacher. Commonly, however, it has the meaning of secret doctrine—a digest of the principles and mysteries contained in the Vedas, the Vedānta meaning the Veda-end; and some

[1] 'Hist. Anc. Sans. Lit.,' p. 389.

Indian philosophers derive the word from the root *shad*, in the sense of destruction; meaning thereby that the secret doctrine, fully apprehended, would destroy all passion and ignorance, and all knowledge derived from the senses merely—all knowledge save that of the universal Self.

Before passing to a study of this teaching, and leaving behind the simpler form of the earlier Vedism, an important question presents itself. The two departments—Karma-Kānda and Jnāna-Kānda—of works and knowledge, instead of being both simultaneously developed and refined, become, as it were, mutually exclusive; and while works, and even sacrifices, may still have a preparatory part to play, they are regarded rather as the business of the uninitiated; while theosophic knowledge becomes the chief concern of the Upanishads and the monopoly of the select few.

Now, in this the doctrine of the Upanishads is scarcely consistent with its claim to be based on the authority of the Veda. Their Vedāntic teaching purports to be the end of the Veda; and so nothing essential to the Veda should be allowed to drop. A professed believer in the Veda should certainly find a place in his theology for the idea of expiatory sacrifice, just as a believer in the Pentateuch should; for sacrifice forms the very core as well as the shell of the Vedic religion. And why? Because *sin* had a very real place—much more real than it has in the Upanishads. Sin is felt as a burdensome fetter; it does not escape, as we have seen, the gaze of the highest Divinity, against whom it is conceived of as an offence, and is an obstacle in the way of a friendly approach; and penitent confessions of sin, united with prayer for forgiveness, find expression in the speech of simple faith.

It is no answer to say that the Vedas are devoted to

rites, and the Upanishads to contemplation, unless it can be shown how the contemplation *can supply the place* of the rites, and prove equally efficacious for the purposes of religion.[1] It is true that the idea of sacrifice became degraded, and lost its original significance in the glorification of the Brāhmans, in the potent *mantras* that took the place of the sacrifices, and in which only the Brāhmans were skilled; but if the Vedānta accepts this as the true account of its connection with the religion of Vedic times, it condemns itself by tracing its origin either to a perversion or to the abandonment of an important religious observance. Though whole sections of the Upanishads are occupied with speculations on the Vedic rites, what they teach upon this point may be summed up in these words of the Mundaka Upanishad[2]: 'Know the Ātman only, and away with everything else; it alone is the bridge to immortality.' In the Vedas sacrifice was the bridge. But the Veda itself and the whole circle of its sacred science are quite as sweepingly consigned to the second place.[3]

The question therefore presses, What has become of the ancient sacrificial rites? 'King Asoka,' says Colonel G. A. Jacob,[4] 'gave the death-blow to animal sacrifices in the third century before Christ, as various rock and pillar inscriptions bear witness; but the demolition of the rest of the fabric was effected by the orthodox philosophers, who regarded it as "inferior science."' Yet no Hindū need be ashamed of them, since the authorship of sacrifice is attributed in the Vedas to 'Creation's Lord' Himself, and its date is reckoned as coeval with the creation. The

[1] See an article in the *Indian Evangelical Review*, July, 1874, on 'The Logic of the Vedānta.'

[2] ii. 2, 5.

[3] See Barth's 'Religions of India,' p. 81.

[4] 'Manual of Hindū Pantheism,' p. 15.

idea exists that *Prajāpati*, begotten before the world, becoming half immortal and half mortal, offered himself mystically in a body fit for sacrifice, thereby making all subsequent sacrifice a reflection or figure of himself. And there was profound truth in the belief that sacrifice was 'a *good ferrying-boat* for getting over the ocean of sins.' It gave men a prospect of the future without the dismal intervening cycles of transmigration, and a comfort which only those who understand how sin and death have been vanquished by Christ can fully enjoy. Witness the language of the believer in sacrifices addressed to a dying father:

> 'Depart thou, depart by the ancient paths whither our ancient fathers have departed: . . . throwing off all imperfection, again go to thy home. Radiant, become united to a body.' [1]

—a conception more allied to Christian thought than to the re-incarnation and final absorption of the Upanishads.

Unhappily, as we have seen, a declension in the doctrine of sacrifice set in; the self-offering of Prajāpati was forgotten, and the significance of sacrifice was lost, the ceremonies degenerating into empty *acts of slaughter*, which led in time to the iconoclastic assault of Buddhism. But the abuse of a thing is no proof against its true and proper use. The idea of sacrifice is inherent in human nature, and ought to have been retained, cherished, purified, and realized; though when the conception of Deity becomes impersonal, as it does in the Upanishads, there is no Supreme Being to whom sacrifices, even of the heart and life, can be offered. That the idea was true and necessary is shown by the fact that the sacrificial system, suppressed during the period of the Upanishads, broke out again afterwards in the popular sectarian cults of Vaishnavites

[1] Rig-veda, x. 14, 7 *et seq.*

and Saivites; and material sacrifices—bloodless except in the non-Āryan cults—offered to manifold deities have continued, in one form and another, down to the present day, and must continue in India and other non-Christian lands till Christ, the great *Fulfiller* of sacrifices, is understood and accepted.

For how has it been with the Christian? Christianity occupies much the same position with regard to the ancient sacrificial system of Judaism as Brāhmanism does to Vedism. What became of the old Jewish sacrificial rites? They were abolished after Christ came, the true spiritual ideas underlying them having been *fulfilled and realized* in Him. The religious instinct expressed in material sacrifices has everywhere been satisfied in the Cross. Christ is both sacrifice and altar, high-priest and mediator, not because He *is* any one of these, but because He has superseded and fulfilled them all, taking up and transforming into a higher level the elements that existed previously in a lower form. The whole of the Mosaic ritual has passed away like a shadow, because the *substance* which it symbolized has taken its place.

Mere sacrificial rites and ceremonies—all animal or material offerings—must always occupy a very low and elementary level in the religious life; but sacrifice itself, under a process of spiritual evolution, becomes the very flower and crown of Christianity. We no longer bring bulls and goats or fruits and foods to the altar; but we still approach God by one sublime Sacrifice for sins.

The ideal of the Vedic Prajāpati, mortal and yet Divine, himself both priest and victim, who by death overcame death, has long since been lost in India. Among the many gods of the Hindū pantheon, none has ever come forward to claim the vacant throne once reverenced by Indian rishis. No other than the Jesus of the Gospels—

'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world' has ever appeared to fulfil this primitive idea of redemption by the efficacy of sacrifice; and when this Christian truth is preached, it ought not to sound strange or unreasonable to Indian ears.

But one of the most disastrous facts of the India of to-day is that modern Brāhmanism, like modern Parsīism, has been fast losing its old ideas, relaxing its hold on the more spiritual portions—if properly interpreted—of the ancient faith. Vedic Hindūism, as such, has disappeared, and chiefly because its idea of sacrifice has remained unfulfilled in the highest religious thought, and can be spiritually reached only in Christ, who unifies the fragments of truth scattered about in the ancient faiths and reveals their real meaning.

CHAPTER VI

THE UPANISHADS AND VEDANTISM

The Place and Importance of the Upanishads—Ancient and Modern—The Materials of Hindū Philosophy and Germs of Buddhism—Max Müller's Judgment—Profundities and Trivialities — Their Main Idea and Object—Their Highest Philosophy—The Vedānta—Its European Appreciators—Hindū Philosophy and Religion one—Contrasted with Western—The Vedānta: how modernized—Its Revival through the medium of English.

OWING to the absence of historical records in India, any attempt to fix the relative age of the Upanishads is hopeless. Professor Max Müller gives a list of about 150; while Dr. Burnell says that in Southern India they are reckoned at 108, and he gives the total number extant in the whole of India as 170.[1] They are written for the most part in prose, with occasional variations in verse, and belong evidently to very different periods of Indian thought. The most ancient and important—whose authors' names are unknown, the genuine or classical Upanishads to which Sankarāchārya appeals in his great commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras—are eleven in number,[2] and these are the fundamental Upanishads of the Vedānta philosophy. They

[1] 'Indian Antiquity,' vol. ii., p. 267.

[2] The Brihadāranyaka, Chhāndogya, Taittirīya, Aītareya, Kausītaki, Kena, Katha, Īsa, Mundaka, Prasna, and Māndūkya Upanishads.

are probably as old as the sixth century B.C., or anterior to the rise of Buddhism; while others are comparatively modern, and many of them purely sectarian, put forth by followers of Rāma, Krishna, Siva, Ganapati, and other deities. The earlier Upanishads would appear to contain the germs of Buddhism, while Buddhism is in many respects the doctrine of the Upanishads carried out to its last consequent, and employed as the foundation of a new social system. The highest goal of the Vedānta—the knowledge of the true Self—is the Buddhist 'completely enlightened one'; while the *sannyāsi*, or devotee, is the Buddhist emancipated friar, whose spiritual freedom becomes the common property of the *sangha*, or fraternity, which is open alike to all.

The Upanishads were the means of making known for the first time the ancient Vedic literature beyond the boundaries of India. They have been translated from the original Sanskrit into Persian, and into a few of the vernaculars of India, such as Bengali and Hindī; also into Latin, French, German, and English. Professor Max Müller has translated twelve of the most important in his 'Sacred Books of the East' series, and it is this translation that has been chiefly followed.

These old books, while giving rise to the six *Darsanas*, or schools of Hindū philosophy in general, whose original text-books consist of *Sūtras*, have contributed the most important materials to what may be called the orthodox philosophy of India—the Vedānta—of which so much is heard in the present day, and which literally means the Veda-end, the end of the Veda—the Upanishads being terminating sections of the different Vedas—but also the goal and scope, the highest object of the Veda. And this is the religion or philosophy that has lived on from about 500 B.C. to the present time; 'is breathed by every Hindū

from his earliest youth, and pervades in various forms the prayers even of the idolater, the speculations of the philosopher, and the proverbs of the beggar.'[1] 'If the people of India,' says Colonel G. A. Jacob, in his 'Vedānta Sāra,' 'can be said to have now any system of religion at all, apart from mere caste observances, it is to be found in the Vedānta philosophy, the leading tenets of which are known to some extent in every village.'[2]

The Vedānta doctrine, while based on the Upanishads, is likewise systematized and supported in the *Vedānta-Sūtras*, or Brahma-Sūtras, attributed to Bādarāyana, supposed to be the same as Veda-Vyāsa, the oldest and most celebrated commentary of which is that of Sankarāchārya, and called the Sankara-bhāshya, selected by Thibaut for translation. A popular compendium of orthodox Vedāntism is further found in the Vedānta-Sāra, the work of Sadānanda, of which there are three English translations by Dr. Roer, Dr. J. R. Ballantyne, and, more recently (1891), by Colonel G. A. Jacob, who has also published it in Sanskrit.

The Vedānta has different schools of interpretation, represented by the three great Āchāryas — Sankara, Rāmānuja, and Mādhva, that of Sankara being the oldest and most orthodox. The Upanishads undoubtedly admit of different interpretations. Their authors belong to different sections of society, some of the most important being Kshatriyas or Rājput Kings;[3] and these generations

[1] 'India: What can it teach us?' p. 249.

[2] 'Manual of Hindu Pantheism,' Preface.

[3] It is maintained by Charles Johnston, M.R.A.S., a retired Bengal civilian, who has made ancient Indian studies his speciality, that the name Brāhmanism cannot be fitly given to the Upanishads, in which all that is most characteristic of the Brāhmanas, viz., the system of priestcraft and ceremonial bartering with the gods, is unsparingly denounced, and that the race of Red Rājputs were the real spiritual

of Vedic theologians had their own favourite sacred texts which they studied and speculated upon, these speculations coming in course of time to be looked upon as sacred, too. There is unquestionably a certain uniformity running throughout the Upanishads, though with considerable divergence in detail. They were, however, never meant to form a philosophical system coherent in all their parts and free from contradictions. Their authors belonged to different periods of time, and do not claim any Divine inspiration that would preserve a continuous revelation of truth. The views of one sage do not agree in several important points with those of another as to the nature of the highest Brahman or Supreme, whether he possesses qualities (*sagunam*) or is destitute of qualities (*nirgunam*), personal or impersonal, though the latter represents the prevailing thought. They differ also as to the reality or unreality of the external world, and as to the nature of the soul, whether it is of minute size, and an agent, and therefore finite; or whether it is identical with the Supreme, and therefore infinite. All this invests these ancient treatises with not a little difficulty to those who study them, though their interest and value are not thereby diminished.

While Professor Cowell remarks that there runs through them an unmistakable spirit of pantheism, often in its most offensive form,[1] the famous Rājā Rāmmohan Ray, on

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masters of India. In certain Upanishads (Brihad-Āran, chap. vi., Khand, chap. v.) the chief actors in the drama are Rājput Kings, and Brāhmans come to them as pupils. Though fully initiated in the mysteries of the Brāhmanical caste and learned in the Rig-veda, the Yajas-veda, and the Sāma-veda, they confess their entire ignorance of five questions put to them by the Rājput Kings—questions that implied the whole doctrine of re-incarnation and the complementary doctrine of liberation and final oneness with the Eternal.

[1] Elphinstone's 'History of India,' p. 282.

the other hand, saw in them little besides monotheism, and founded his revival of religion some sixty years ago on the Upanishads and Vedānta.

Professor Max Müller, while being a most generous appreciator of India's best, speaks with great discrimination of the Upanishads and of the sacred books of the East generally. After referring in his Preface to the difficulty of securing faithful translations, of construing and understanding ancient books, that, while 'modern words are round, ancient words are square,' and that we may as well hope to solve the quadrature of the circle as to 'express adequately the ancient thoughts of the Veda in modern English'—a difficulty inseparable from all investigations into the ancient thought of any country—he says that it has been a problem to him for years how these books 'should, side by side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial, and silly, but even hideous and repellent.'[1] Certain passages have been found too indelicate to be translated, as is the case also with the Mahābhārata and other Indian writings, and of these he gives the original in footnotes.

Elsewhere he speaks of the 'precious grains of gold' that are 'hidden under heaps of rubbish,' and of the real difficulties of the Upanishads consisting in 'the extraordinary number of passages which seem to us utterly meaningless and irrational, or so far-fetched that we can hardly believe that the same author who can express the deepest thoughts on religion and philosophy with clearness and with a kind of poetical eloquence, could have uttered in the same breath such utter rubbish.'[2] 'Yes,' he says a friend of his wrote to him, 'you are right: how tremendously ahead of other sacred books is the Bible! the differences strike one as almost unfairly great.' And he remarks: 'We must try to imagine what the Old Testament would have been if it had not been

[1] 'The Upanishads,' vol. i., Introduction.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 19.

kept distinct from the Talmud'—those commentaries on the Scriptures by the Jewish rabbis which consist of a mass of incredible trivialities and moral hair-splitting—'or the New Testament if it had been mixed up with the spurious gospels or with the records of the wranglings of the early Church Councils, if we wish to understand the wild confusion of sublime truth with vulgar stupidity that meets us in the pages of the sacred books.' Folly is mixed with wisdom; and 'we must learn to look up to their highest points and down into their stony tracts, in order to comprehend both the height and the depth of the human mind in its searchings after the Infinite.'[1]

This is precisely what others must feel in studying the Upanishads. There is a strange medley of the sublime and the commonplace, of profundities and trivialities, of philosophy and superstition. We find there the Nature-worship of the Vedas, especially of the sun, and mention made of 33 and even 3,306 deities.[2] We find sexual relations in the Supreme—that the Self divided into two, and so produced husband and wife, and from these were 'created everything that exists in pairs down to the ants.'[3] We find details of Vedic sacrifices, of oblations of curds and honey, and many puerile rites and superstitious ceremonies. We find human greatness associated with children and cattle and fame and long life. We find astrology and strange astronomy, such as the soul leaving the body and passing through the air, coming first to the sun, and then, at a greater distance, ascending to the moon; and the Hindū belief about eclipses—the moon escaping from the mouth of Rāhu[4] and strange anatomy—the arteries and branch arteries numbering 727,200,000.[5] We find interesting evidence of the knowledge and practice of certain arts and sciences, such as smelting of iron,

[1] 'The Upanishads,' vol. i., pp. 15, 20.
[2] Brihad.-Upan. iii., Adh. 9, Br. 2.
[3] *Ibid.*, Br. 4.
[4] Khand-Upan., 8th Prap., 13th Khand
[5] Prasna-Upan., 3rd question, 6.

pottery, wheel-making, and the chemistry of metals; but also that a Divine origin is claimed for caste,[1] and such bewildering morality as that a man who knows a certain thing, 'even if he commits what seems much evil, consumes it all and becomes pure and clean.'[2] We find a full-blown and elaborate doctrine of transmigration, and that those whose conduct has been evil are born again as dog or hog,[3] worm, insect, fish, bird, lion, boar and serpent,[4] rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans.[5]

We find also much importance attached to protracted bodily stillness and fixity of look, to certain modes of breathing and to suppression of breath, to the mental repetition of strange sets of formulæ, and to meditations on the unfathomable mysteries contained in certain monosyllables, such as the famous AUM, the symbol of the Absolute under its threefold personalization. We find great subtleties of thought expressed in such pregnant brevity that in every sentence we seem to read a page; a labyrinth of mystic language, tedious repetitions, and puerile conceits; the use of fanciful metaphors and unconnected images, of defective analogies in place of proof, such as arguing from a rope being mistaken for a serpent to the unreality of the visible universe; or from the man with diseased eyes who sees two moons where there is in reality only one, to show that it is only ignorance (*avidya*) that takes the world as real; or from the fact that all earthen pots are in truth only earth, that the whole world is nothing but Brahma. We find a want of system and of common-sense, a tendency to speculate rather than investigate, and, therefore, contro-

[1] Brihad.-Upan. i., Adh. 4, Br. 11. [2] *Ibid.*, Adh. 5, Br. 14.
[3] Khand-Upan., 5th Prap., 10th Khand, 7, 8.
[4] Kaushitaki-Upan. i., Adh. 2.
[5] Aitareya-Aran. ii., Adh. 1, Khand. 2.

versies always beginning afresh, the solving of insolvable enigmas, the attaining unattainable frames of mind.

But all these we pass over, unaccounted for and unexplained, and desire to remain rather on the uplands of Indian imagination, and to notice the best features of the Upanishads—those that lift the human heart from the earthly to a higher level, the elevated thoughts and deep spirituality, the pathetic guesses at truth in relation to the greatest questions that the mind of man can propose to itself; for in the groping after something felt to be needed, in the yearning of hearts dissatisfied and empty, *lies the value* of the Upanishads. They do not claim, as does the Bible, to have a Divine message for the world, neither do they contain, as do the Vedic hymns, any fervid and beautiful prayers to heaven; they are rather psychological excursions *about* the Highest, the Absolute. The Bible, as we have said, shows God in quest of man rather than man in quest of God, and when thoughtfully studied and experienced will be found to meet the questions raised by this ancient philosophy, and to supply its only true solution.

What now is the fundamental idea and the highest object of the Upanishads as interpreted by the first great commentator, Sankarāchārya, and in part also by Rāmānujāchārya? It is this: that behind all the phenomena and mythology of Nature, behind the Vedic deities, behind all 'names and forms' (*nāma-rūpa*), there is the Supreme Soul, or cosmical principle, of the universe—*Brahma*, the Highest Self, the *Paramātman*,[1] the Absolute; offering certain parallels to the *τὸ ὄν* or the *ὕλη* of Greek philosophy, to the idealism of Plato, to the infinite being or *substantia* of Spinoza, or to the transcendentalism of Jacobi or Schelling. And, further, that behind the veil of the body and the

[1] In the Rig-veda, *ātman* is simply 'breath': in the Brāhmanas it signifies 'soul' or 'self,' from which the *prānas*, or 'vital airs,' proceed.

senses, behind our reason and all mental manifestation, beyond the ego with its accidents and limitations, there is another Ātman, or subjective self, the psychical principle —the unchanging Ego as the unifying principle of consciousness. This self can only be discovered by a severe moral and intellectual discipline, such as is practised by the *sannyāsin*, or mendicant ascetic, or *yogi*—a person having his senses and passions under complete control. If we would get at the truths which lie beyond and behind this phenomenal world, we must cultivate self-restraint and tranquillity, suppress our actions, or, at any rate, renounce the desire for the fruit of one's actions, since it is this fruit, or *Karma*, that chains one to this world by repeated births and deaths. The various systems of *Yoga* philosophy current among Hindūs—as these self-restraining exercises are termed—have for their foundation the national belief in the necessity for human souls to seek liberation from the bondage of the flesh by realizing, as the *Ādvaitin* (non-dualist) does, that the Eternal Principle of all being—the Power that evolves, supports, and again withdraws into itself all worlds—is identical with the Ātman, the self or soul in us. The highest 'self' is enthroned on our inner self, and those who wish to know, not themselves, but their self, have, according to the Vedānta, to penetrate behind the mind and the personality before they can find 'the self of selves, the old man, the looker-on.' The highest knowledge possible to man begins to dawn when the self within *finds and knows its true self in the Highest Self*, the individual being a mere transitory reflection of the Eternal; and the highest aim of all thought and study, through this knowledge (*Jnāna-Kānda*), is *to return to the world-soul, the Highest Self, and regain identity with it.*

'The jar is broken, and the ether that was in it is one with the one and undivided ether, from which the jar once seemed to sever it.'

'Here to know is to be; to know the Ātman is to be the Ātman; and the reward of this highest knowledge after death is freedom from new births, or immortality.'[1] As one of the Upanishads profoundly and beautifully says: 'There is one Eternal Thinker, thinking non-eternal thoughts; He, though One, fulfils the desires of many. The wise who perceive Him within their self, to them belongs eternal life, eternal peace.'[2]

The highest wisdom of Greece was 'to know *ourselves*'; the highest wisdom of India is 'to know our *Self*.'

Such was the dream of ancient India—with which modern psychical research has much in common—and the loftiest peak of its philosophic thought, the first attempt at the science of the Absolute, instinct with the spirit of speculative daring, one of the most imposing and subtle systems of ontology yet known; and the Vedānta, styled by Sankarāchārya 'the string upon which the gems of the Upanishads are strung,' is regarded as the finest flower and ripest fruit of Indian spirituality. Indeed, the Upanishads may be said to represent the highest water-mark of religious thought to be found outside the Bible revelation; they contain the highest authority on which the various systems of Indian philosophy rest, and are practically the only portion of Vedic literature which is extensively studied by orthodox, educated Hindūs in the present day. 'This Vedānta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, I would make bold to state,' says Swāmi Vivekānanda, 'has been the first as well as the final thought, which on the spiritual plane has been vouchsafed to man.'[3]

It has also its appreciators in Europe. Not to speak of its similarity in some respects to Berkeley's 'Idealism,' though essentially different both as regards the Divine

[1] See 'The Upanishads,' vol. i., p. 30; also the Hibbert Lectures for 1878, p. 317.

[2] Katha-Upan. v., 12, 13.

[3] 'From Colombo to Almora,' p. 241.

Being and the reality of the phenomenal universe, Professor Max Müller has represented it in an attractive light, and other German philosophers, such as Schopenhauer and his ardent disciple, Professor Deussen, of Kiel, confess to much enthusiasm for this particular wisdom of the East. These two speak of the study of the Upanishads as elevating and consoling. Professor Deussen, in his 'Essay on the Philosophy of the Vedānta in its Relation to the Occidental Metaphysics,' says that it is equal in rank to Plato and Kant, and is one of the most valuable products of the genius of mankind in its search for the eternal truth. And it is urged by modern Hindū Vedāntists that the school of German thought first expressed by Kant, completed by Schopenhauer, and further elaborated by Deussen, brings the Western world nearer and nearer to the *Advaita*, or monistic position, and the Vedānta is claimed to be 'the key to all religions, the lamp by which all can be studied.'

It is not surprising that the subjective and speculative mind of the typical German should be in sympathy with Oriental systems, and that between the pessimistic thought of Germany—as darkly reflected in the gloomy mind of a Schopenhauer, 'the founder of modern pessimism,' who defined himself as a 'despiser of men' generally—and the Indian philosophy, which views existence as an unmixed evil, there should be much affinity. While, however, the German philosopher gives it as his opinion that 'there is no study so elevating and consoling as that of the Upanishads,' a gifted Hindū ascetic observed not long since: 'There is no ideal of life so pure and lofty as that which is found in your New Testament, and no example so holy and sweet as is given in the character of your Christ. I find my greatest comfort and inspiration when I turn to that book and read of Him.'

In this simple and beautiful testimony we have the utterance of the heart when man turns from philosophy to religion; for the first thing to be observed about the Vedānta is that religion here becomes an absolute *philosophy*, the evils of existence being due to ignorance, and not to sin as witnessed by the conscience, and rectified, not by a renovated will, but by an intellectual illumination. It is, indeed, the boast in India that religion and philosophy cannot be separated, and that the one cannot be understood apart from the other, thus resembling the system of Spinoza, where a purely intellectual philosophy is identified with religion. As with the Alexandrian Gnostics, so with the Hindūs: their minds are so constituted that a religion without a metaphysical basis is unthinkable. The highest Indian philosophy — the Vedanta—*is* the highest Indian religion, and affirms the 'one without a second.' Similarly, Plato and Aristotle saw in God the apex of true philosophy; but while fully recognising the religious bearings of the great Greek writers, from Homer down to Lucian, still, no one ever associates the philosophy with the religion of ancient Greece, save by way of contrast, since the Greeks knew of no organized religion except the worship of the popular gods, and not one of the Greek schools of philosophy gave a god to Greek worship, whereas Hindū philosophy has always stood in formal connection with revelation.

And the question is often asked in India, 'Has Christianity ever *overcome* a religion which, like the Hindū, had a sound philosophy as its basis?' More might perhaps be said in its favour if it realized the dictum of Bacon—that 'depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion'; but it is just here where it is lacking, since the awakened religious consciousness turns, as did the ascetic's, instinctively to Christ. Religion differs from

philosophy in that it deals with wills and personalities, and not with abstract essences; and philosophy, if it is to satisfy the needs of man, must pass into religion. For the God of religion is the object of worship, while the god of philosophy is a product of speculation, and philosophy has never given a god to religion, though religion has often given the idea of God to philosophy. Thus, there may be a philosophy *of* religion; but, as Principal Fairbairn points out,[1] religion may exist *without* philosophy, and has always existed *before* it; and while the two may thus become allies, they can never be identical, except, as is the case in India, in the minds of certain transcendentalists.

Moreover, Indian philosophy is not philosophy in the European sense; it is not a search for truth for truth's sake. This explains the growth of philosophy in Europe during even the last two hundred years, as connected with the names of Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, whereas nothing has been added to the Vedānta philosophy for centuries. It knows no development. The Hindūs are philosophizers rather than philosophers—lovers of and seekers after truth. For their thought takes the form of mystical, religious speculation, the prime object of all the philosophical systems being the redemption or deliverance of man, though not man in his *universal* relations, but only man as known to Hindūism; and this deliverance is reached, not by salvation from sin, but by the complete separation of soul from body. We may thus have a religious philosophy, but not a philosophy of religion. The burden of Western philosophy is what is mentally unintelligible, and that of Eastern philosophy what is practically unbearable; and liberation from birth and death, deliverance from the

[1] In his 'Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History.'

bonds of individual and separate existence—an existence separate from the soul of the universe—is the one goal.

We have said that nothing has been added to the Vedānta for centuries. Now, however, a change is observable. The pure Vedāntism of the past, which, in its most orthodox form, is essentially pantheistic, is a pure product of Indian soil, but far too speculative and transcendental to be a practical guide to life. The effort is therefore being made by those who have received a Western education—who are now its chief exponents—to link the past to the present, and so enlarge the outlook by trying to harmonize the older Hindūism with the progressive scientific spirit of the present century. A Vedāntic terminology is freely used, but its exposition by the new school would not be accepted by pandits of the older type. It is altogether too modern. Meanings and senses are read back into the old Sanskrit which probably had no existence in the author's mind. It is very noticeable in the present day, when Western thought and influence are everywhere in the ascendant, how a new kind of style and expression has found an entrance into the writings of those Hindūs who think largely in English—those, *e.g.*, of Swāmi Vivekānanda and his master, Rāmakrishna Parama-hansa—quite different from that of purely native thinkers who think in Sanskrit, such as the Indian pandits and gurus. There is an application of the language of the Vedānta to new and even opposite conceptions and thoughts. It is further significant that the publications and discourses advocating the revival of the Vedānta are almost entirely *in English*. The sacred language so long used for religious purposes—the classic Sanskrit—is discarded, and the English tongue is considered good enough for the discussion of the mysteries of the faith. The mere fact that the language of religious discussion has been

changed shows how great the new departure is. But the point of chief interest to Christians is this: that while this neo-Hindūism is set forth as a proud rival to Christianity, it is yet saturated with its spirit, and there is an evident desire to harmonize the ideals of Hindūism with those of Christianity. In the expositions of the Vedānta, Christian scholars and poets—Martineau, Balfour, Wordsworth, and others—are largely drawn upon, and frequent quotations are given from the Bible, Christian conceptions are read into them, and a distinctly Christian colouring is traceable in the *Brahmavādin*[1] and in many present-day pamphlets. No follower of the new cult would recognise the claims of Christ to Divinity, though allowing Him to have been a sage or rishi of the highest rank, exercising the greatest moral influence; but while popular Hindūism would give Christ Himself a place in its pantheon, modern Vedāntism would absorb and assimilate the best of Christian thought, and proclaim it in terms of its philosophy.

Now, however, we have to revert to the original Vedānta, in order to examine its fundamental teaching and erroneous conclusions, and then to outline its practical results in the life and thought and worship of the people.

[1] A monthly periodical published in Madras, and started in 1895, for the exposition of the Vedānta.

CHAPTER VII

ANCIENT VEDANTISM

India's Sense of the Infinite—In the Midst of the Transient—Its Mystic Pantheism—Vedāntic Doctrine of Brahma—Expounded in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-gītā, the Vedāntasāra — Sachchidānanda — 'Impartite' — 'Substrate' — Material Cause of the World — Isvara — Personal Souls—Swāmi Vivekānanda's Teaching—Doctrine of God and the World in the Light of Christian Philosophy—Personality, Human and Divine.

It has been said that the latent capacity of man for transcending the finite, and his affinity to what is universal and infinite, is the key to the evolution of religion, and ancient India supplies us with its earliest form.[1]

At first sight, the personification of the objects and forces of Nature, the sun, dawn, firmament, winds, and storms, such as we find in the Vedic hymns, presents a polytheistic Nature-worship. A closer study, however, shows that the various divinities have not that distinct individuality which marks the mythologies of Greece and Rome, and gradually, as the Indian mind became more reflective and philosophical, these separate Nature divinities fade away, and Nature is regarded as a whole—a

[1] See 'The Faiths of the World,' lecture i. (Blackwood and Sons).

unity in which they blend, and for which they are only varied expressions. As a passage as early even as the Rig-veda states :[1] 'That which exists is *one*. Sages call it variously.'

It has been said that in all ancient faiths the priestly deity was one, and the deity of spirit and thought another. As long as we have to do with the sacerdotalism of the Vedas, we have to do with a materialistic religion—a religion of forms and ordinances and sacrifices, and it is the same to-day. Emancipation from the priest brings with it an ampler air and an enlarged spiritual world.

If we ask what it was that led the mind first of all to deify certain natural objects, and then to find beneath them all an enduring substance, passing from the worship of the elements personified to the worship of the unseen force behind them, we reply that it was the sense of the vanity and unreality and fleeting character of all finite possessions and satisfactions. Thus, India's reverence has never been for the material form, but for *pure spirit*; and its central thought, which binds together all its conflicting elements, has been the progress of the pilgrim soul, through all finite existences, to reunion with the infinite. India is the land of the infinite. Its skies are so deep and blue, its mountains so lofty and inaccessible, its forests so dense and boundless, its rivers so broad and long, that it is natural for the Indian to conceive the infinite. And to such a mind the all-embracing sky, the majestic sun, the silent stars, the everlasting hills, the noble rivers, early became types of permanence and power in the midst of a feeble and fleeting life, and these were forthwith deified.

Then, later on, when reflection and speculation came to be exercised on the contents of the early hymns, the religious consciousness, in the Upanishads, attempts to

[1] R.V. i. 146, 46.

pass beyond Nature, beyond everything, beyond 'where words cannot go, nor mind,' and, content with no 'penultimate ideas,' to grasp an invisible essence, which is neither the heavens nor the earth, but something infinitely greater and more abiding than all—*the innermost substratum both of Nature and man.* Thus, unlike European pantheism, which has commonly identified the world with God, so that the finite *is* the infinite, Indian mystic pantheism affirms, not the deification of the finite world, but its *nothingness.*[1] The formula that expresses it is, not the world is God, but the world is nothing, and there is '*One only without a second*' (*ekam eva advitīyam*).[2] It is the answer that the human mind at an early stage gives to the problem of the one in many—an attempt to give unity to its ideas by the aid of the logical category of substance. For, just as behind the various qualities and changes of a flower there is something we regard as constant and permanent, so beneath all the surface appearance of things there is one and only one Reality that never changes, which the Upanishads call the Self, the Brahman, or the Absolute. It is a later stage of thought that argues from the existence of the world to the notion of a First Cause—an all-wise and omnipotent Creator. And at the earlier stage, when the mind was groping and guessing after truth, metaphors rather than formal reasoning governed thought, and the deepest reflections of philosophy were embodied in sensuous images. The Supreme is represented as saying:[3] 'I am the light in the sun, the brilliancy in flame, the fragrance in the earth, the goodness of the good, the beginning, middle, and end of all'; but what was meant was that Brahma is

[1] See on this point Ballantyne's 'Christianity contrasted with Hindū Phil.,' p. 48.

[2] Chhāndogya-Upan. vi. 1.

[3] *Cf.* Bhagavad-gītā, vii. 8-11; ix. 16, 17; x. 20-42.

the only being that really is. And so we find the *Brahmavādin* saying: 'This common unity, this underlying essence, is God, timeless, spaceless, causeless, and the world from this standpoint is nothing but God manifesting Himself in different names and forms. . . .We must remember that the *Vedānta* does not say that the tree we see before us is God. So long, of course, as we look upon the tree as tree, it is nothing but a tree; but when we dive deep, leaving name and form behind, and try to realize the inner essence of the tree, we see nothing but God. And that is what the *Vedānta* means when it asks us to see God in everything. The difference between the *Vedānta* and pantheism may be thus summed up: According to pantheism God is the sum or totality of phenomena, while according to the *Vedānta*, God is the one underlying essence of phenomena, which are but the results of name and form superimposed upon the essence.' [1]

This distinction invites us to a brief examination of the Vedānta doctrine on these points.

The introductory stanza of the *Vedāntasāra* runs thus: 'To the Self, existent, intelligence, bliss, impartite, beyond the range of speech and thought, the substrate of all, I resort for the attainment of the desired thing'—*i.e.*, final beatitude. The 'Self' (*parama Ātman*) here referred to is Absolute, or Brahman or Brahma (nom. neuter) of the Vedānta, derived from the Sanskrit word *Brih* (to grow or increase), the expansive force of nature, an unseen, spiritual power everywhere present and manifested in all forms of life. This power, called by the modern exponents of the Vedānta God, as evolved from the inner consciousness of the ancient rishis, was thus the universal substance or underlying essence, of which the visible world and gods and men were merely manifestations. In one of the Upanishads,

[1] The *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii., p. 189.

the question is asked: 'Which is the one deity?' (when called by another name); and the answer is: 'The *Prāna* (breath). It is considered as that Brahma.'[1] Again, it is said: 'Verily, the wind (*vāyu*) is the individuality (*i.e.*, the substance of growth of each individual thing or person, (*vyashti*), and the wind is the totality'[2] (*i.e.*, the substance of growth of the universe, *samashti*). According to this, the whole universe is regarded as having grown from one substance called *Brahma*, which appears as the 'wind' in the macrocosm, or universe, and as the *prāna*, or breath, in man, the microcosm. In other passages the Brahma is called the *Ātman*, both words *prāna* and *Ātman* being derived from the root *an*, to breathe, and originally meaning breath, wind, so that the *Ātman* of the Hindū pantheist is an altogether different idea from the 'soul' of the Christian. 'This Ātman,' it is said, 'which is the Brahma, is all mind (*manas*), all airs of the body, all eye, all ear, all earth, all water, all wind, all sky, all light, all darkness, all lust, all passivity, all anger, all composedness, all virtue, all vice, all everything.'[3] Similarly, in the Bhagavad-gītā, Krishna, as the Supreme, is represented as declaring, among other appellations: 'Of weapons I am the thunderbolt; of wild beasts the imperial beast; of purifications I am the wind; of creations the beginning and the ending, and also the middle am I; I also inexhaustible time; I the supporter whose face turns everywhere. And all-devouring death am I, and the origin of all to come. I am the gambling of the rogue, and the splendour of splendid things; I am victory; I am strenuous exertion; and the truth of the truthful I. Of subjugating

[1] Brihad.-Aran.-Upan. iii. 9, 1–9. *Cf.* Chhānd.-Up. vii. 1–15 Katha-Up. vi. 2; Mait-Up. vi. 11.

[2] Br.-Ar.-Up. iii. 3, 2.

[3] Br.-Ar.-Up. iv. 4, 5. Chhānd-Up. vii 26, 1.

things I am the sceptre; of conquerors I am statesmanship and of secrecy I am also science; the knowledge of knowers am I. And whatever is the seed of all beings, that am I, O Arjuna! nor is there aught, moving or unmoving, that may exist bereft of me.'[1]

It is thus not easy to grasp this ancient conception and do it justice. At one time the conception of Brahma seems to be grossly materialistic—a sort of latent electricity pervading the universe as a body. At another time it becomes the most illusive transcendentalism. In part this may perhaps be explained by the fact that the peculiar feature, and, indeed, beauty, of the Sanskrit language lies in its condensation of thought in words, and in its power of suggesting various meanings and ideas by association, which cannot be done justice to in a word-for-word translation. But beyond this, we have the deeper fact that the old Indian rishis were undoubtedly 'feeling after' the one true God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, 'if haply they might find Him'; but having started in their quest from Nature rather than from Revelation, and reading the Infinite and the finite through Nature, they vainly struggled after the truth in the mazes of pantheism. Brahma is the exhaustive equivalent of the sum of things, the Source and Substance, the Life and Soul of all that is—inexpressible, immeasurable, incomprehensible.

While the doctrine of agnosticism or nescience—that God is inaccessible to human thoughts and words—is accepted by the Vedānta, and is 'in entire accord with the general view of its theology,'[2] yet the ancient thinkers did not hesitate to predicate certain things about the nature of Brahma. Though Hindu philosophy could find no one word for the high Abstraction—the 'That'—without form

[1] Bhagavad-gītā, x. 20–39.

[2] See *Brahmavādin*, vol. ii., p. 65.

and limit, which is 'not to be seen with the eye nor heard with the ear, from which the mind falls back abashed,' and which can only be described by negatives, 'not this, not that,' it nevertheless describes Brahma as *Sat-chit-ānanda*, which is the nearest approach to a name for It. *Sat* signifies existent; *Chit*, intelligence; *Ananda*, bliss, and these three, being one only—the existent 'joy-thought'—form the first and final limit which the limited mind gives to the unlimited. They are not, however, to be considered as qualities of Brahma, for he has none. He does not even exist, he *is* existence, the only real existence, all other apparent existences or phenomena being only imagined by ignorance, or seen as in a dream. The *Brahma* of the Vedānta, according to *Swāmi Vivekānanda*, is 'the last generalization to which we can come,' under whose all-embracing concept all our ideas of existence are included. But this generalization is not reached by inductive reason, by any careful study of particulars, since the Infinite of the Vedānta is out of all relation to the finite; and this being the case, Brahma's existence, devoid as he is of qualities, cannot be established. He is, moreover, unconscious, and only as we are conscious, and have ideas, can we be said to exist.

Brahma is held to be 'Intelligence' (*Chit*), 'Cognition,' or 'Knowledge' (*jnāna*). But this is to be understood as knowledge in the abstract, not the knowing subject, for it would then be limited by its cognitions. There is no object; the one real Being is absolutely simple. Brahma is intelligence, not intelligent. It is 'neither conscious nor unconscious.'[1] If it were conscious, there would be objects of consciousness, and this would involve relation and dualism, and Brahma, being brought under will, activity, happiness, and misery, would become a 'doer of good and

[1] Māndūkya Upan. v. 7.

evil works, and so an heir of Elysium or of hell.'[1] Thibaut says, 'Brahma is not a thinking being, but thought itself.'[2] He or It, therefore, apprehends no person or thing, nor is apprehended by any. Gough's description is: 'The pure light of characterless knowledge.'[3] It has been further pointed out by Colonel Jacob that the only ground for supposing Brahma to be intelligence is that man's internal organ (*antahkarana*), which cognizes objects, but yet is unintelligent, receives illumination from the 'self-luminousness' of Brahma; but the internal organ being a portion of the illusory phenomena, that which illuminates it must also be illusory, and Brahma, again, is not established.[4]

So with regard to Brahma's 'Bliss' (*ānanda*). It is bliss in which there is nothing that rejoices, and nothing rejoiced at, and therefore no 'fruition of happiness.' It is simply, as Deussen says, a negative quality—absence of pain and misery—and this 'alone befits Brahma': a very different thing from positive joy. Absorption into Brahma is thus no entrance into a state of conscious felicity, but into a condition of insensibility resembling that of deep sleep; so that the deeper a person is in unconscious, dreamless sleep, the more nearly he resembles Brahma; while the wider awake and the more fully possessed of all his faculties, the further removed he is from Brahma.

Brahma is also said to be 'Impartite,' without parts (*akhanda*), otherwise it would not be eternal; that is to say, it is devoid of any internal variety, being 'absolute and unchangeable unity.' It follows logically from this that each *individual soul is the complete indivisible Brahma*, and that its apparent division into a multiplicity of souls is a

[1] See Nehemiah Goreh's 'Rational Refutation,' etc., p. 154.

[2] Introduction to Vedānta-Sūtras, p. xxv.

[3] 'Philosophy of the Upanishads,' pp. 41, 42.

[4] 'Hindu Pantheism,' pp. 4, 5.

mere fiction of ignorance, just as the moon may appear double to a person of defective vision.

Further, Brahma is declared to be 'Substrate of all' (*akhilādhāra*), though 'only in the way that nacre is of apparent silver, or that a rope is of the snake imagined in it; and, like the silver and the snake, the world is but a *vivartta*, or illusory effect.'[1] Brahma is therefore only its *illusory*-material cause, and ignorance its material cause; for, as Ballantyne observes,[2] 'the existence of aught else being subsequently denied, it remains ultimately the substratum of nothing, or no *sub*-stratum at all.' Thus advaitism or auto-monism is based on illusory analogies or deductions from false premises; and the radical defect of Hindū reasoning is to regard illustration as proof. It is, to say the least, a curious incongruity that in a system which includes Illusion or Māyā as a constituent element, the symbols of sense, under a false analogy, should be continually used in proof of the most abstract principles.

In the earlier Upanishads and in the Vedānta Sūtras *Brahma* is regarded as the material cause (*upādāna kārana*) of the world in a grosser sense—that from which it was evolved (*vikāra*) or developed as foam is produced from water or curd from milk; or, as a great text in the Upanishads says, 'As a spider throws out and retracts (its web), as herbs spring up in the ground, and as hair is produced on the living person, so is the universe derived from the undecaying One.'[3] And again: 'All this (the world of perception) is indeed Brahma, being produced from, resolved unto, and existing in It.'[4] The doctrine of Māyā, or the world's unreality—one of the baseless pillars of the Vedānta—would appear to have been, as Colonel Jacob

[1] 'Hindu Pantheism,' p. 6.

[2] 'Christianity contrasted,' etc., p. xxxi.

[3] Mundaka Upan. i. 1, 7.

[4] Chhānd.-Upan. iii. 14, 1.

says, 'a graft of a later growth,' probably adopted from the Buddhists, the great supporters of Idealism. 'The Svetāsvatara is said to be the oldest Upanishad in which the illusory nature of phenomena is plainly taught, and that trait is evidently post-Buddhistic. In the preface to his translation of it, Dr. Roer says that it "does not belong to the series of the more ancient Upanishads, or of those which preceded the foundation of the philosophical systems."'[1]

The doctrine of Māyā, however, the Vedāntin's view of cosmogony, was a natural and logical growth of Hindū thought. Soul is the one reality that abides (*vastu*), and, according to the fixed axiom that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, the world, composed of an aggregate of souls and of objects external to them, must be in some way formed out of Soul or Brahma itself. But there is, *à priori*, no room for limited intelligences with Divine omniscience everywhere; and so the Vedāntin, unable to deny the affirmations of consciousness as to his own existence and that of other things, takes refuge in his own ignorance, and confesses that he does *not know* himself to be Brahma *because* his soul is enveloped in and obstructed by ignorance (*ajnāna*). It is ignorance, then, that *makes* the world, and, thus becoming an 'entity,' should have an appropriate name. So in the Sānkhya philosophy it is called *Prakriti*, or energy, the unconscious maker of the worlds; while in the Vedānta, where the apparent reality of the world is only an illusion, it becomes Māyā, or 'deceit, illusion, jugglery'; or, viewed in relation to the Divine independence, Brahma's power or *sakti*.

Thus the *real* (*vastu*) is Brahma, existent, intelligence, and joy, without a second; and all else—the whole mass of things, 'from Brahmā (masc.) down to a tuft of grass'

[1] 'Hindu Pantheism,' p. 46.

—is '*unreal*' (*avastu*), imagined by ignorance and beginning with ignorance. The evidence of the senses being quietly ignored, the whole phenomenal universe is destroyed by a stroke. Starting with the false assumption that nothing exists but Brahma, the Vedāntist is forced to devise another to account for that which our senses and minds declare to exist. And 'this creative nescience, *once granted*,' as Professor Max Müller says, 'everything else proceeds smoothly enough. But,' he adds, 'here lies what strikes a Western mind as the vulnerable point of Sankara's Vedānta-philosophy. We should feel inclined to say that even this Avidyā, which causes the phenomenal world to appear, must itself have some cause and reality.' [1] This ādvaitic, or non-duality, doctrine is purely imaginary, and we have another writer saying: 'Even appearances or illusions are phenomena which require to be explained, and they cannot be explained on the hypothesis of absolute unity. They imply that besides the absolute being there are *minds* which can be haunted by appearances, and which can be deluded into believing that these appearances are realities.' [2]

The Upanishads, as expounded by Sankarāchārya, regarded Brahma as existing in two conditions—*nirguna*, unbound, and transcending all attributes; and *saguna*, bound, and possessed of qualities, sometimes called the higher and the lower Brahman. The former is the unassociated, pure, unchangeable Brahma (neuter); the latter is Brahmā (masc.), or Brahma associated with Ignorance or Māyā, as its 'causal body,' being the cause of all things, and who thus becomes an illusory creator, *Isvara*, or lord, so called because he presides as a witness over individual souls, and rewards them according to their

[1] 'Ramakrishna,' p. 72.

[2] Professor Flint's 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' p. 419.

works. He is thus treated as a personal God, as the 'cause of the world'; and being associated with the whole of that portion of Brahma (*upādhi*) which is united with ignorance, possesses qualities of goodness and intelligence, is the 'controller' or impeller of souls, the 'illuminator' and 'internal ruler,' dwelling in the heart of each. But all this, while undoubtedly struggling to express a great truth, is most misleading, when we remember that this *Īsvara*, after all, is only an illusory creator, concerned with the evolution of a dream-world, and that this highest manifestation in the world of unreality is 'the collective aggregate of all animated things,' just as a forest is a collection of trees, so that we have this aggregate presiding over itself![1] Such are the labyrinths that invite the human mind when searching for a theory of the world apart from revelation. The thought of a Divine Being whose nature is science becoming allied to an entity whose nature is nescience, finding no better means of self-knowledge than self-deception, is wildly preposterous.

Brahma, eternally associated with ignorance, strangely viewed as a creative power, or *sakti*, is enabled to project the appearance of the world, and to become specialized in the aggregate as Īsvara, and distributively into a multitude of personal souls (*prājna*), as one and the same sun is mirrored in countless sheets of water, which have no real existence, and, instead of recognising themselves as Brahma, blindly identify themselves with their bodily and mental organisms, and so become involved in all the consequences of rebirths. 'Ignorance, according to the Vedānta,' says Ballantyne, 'has two *powers*—that by which it *envelopes* soul (*āvarana*), giving rise to the conceit of personality, or conscious individuality; and that by which it *projects* (*vikshapa*) the phantasmagoria of a world which the indi-

[1] See 'Hindu Pantheism,' pp. 58, 59.

vidual regards as external to himself.'[1] And so long as a man imagines himself to be something different from Brahma, he is in a state of *avidyā* or *māyā ;* and when he can say '*Brahmāsmi*' (I am Brahma), then he possesses *vidya* and becomes the *jnāni*, or knowing man.

Swāmi Vivekānanda, desiring to be on the lines of modern science, reaches the doctrine of Māyā through the principle of causation. Recognising, with the earlier Vedāntists, Brahma to be the material cause of the universe, and forced to admit that 'all the potentialities of the effect are present in the cause,' he sees that Brahma, the immutable Absolute, must share in those conditions of diversity and change of which the universe is full. But, he asks, 'How is it possible for the unchangeable to change? . . . A changeable God would be no God. To avoid this difficulty, which is generally known by the name of Pantheism, there is a very bold theory of the Vedānta, and the theory is that this universe, as we know it and think it, *does not exist*.'[2] That is to say, in order to support a false theory, our whole mental *constitution* has to be sacrificed. There is no change in the Absolute; it is our senses that are 'painting upon him' the imaginary world,[3] and obscuring the self-luminousness of the Supreme. The phenomenal results of 'name and form' are superimposed upon the underlying Essence.

But it is Brahma, after all, who is the conjurer and magician. As far back as Sankarāchārya the act of creation was likened to the sport of a rājā: and Swāmi Vivekānanda, the latest exponent of the Vedānta, can write as follows: 'The stories about God creating this world for some end or other, that we imagine, are good as stories,

[1] 'Christianity contrasted,' etc., p. xxxvi.
[2] *Brahmavādin*, vol. ii., p. 225.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 275.

but not otherwise. It is all really in sport; the universe is His play going on. . . . He plays in every atom; He is playing when He is building up earths and suns and moons; He is playing with the human heart, with animals, with plants.'[1] An enthusiastic Western admirer of this philosophy—Professor Deussen, of Kiel—also admits it: 'The whole world is illusion (*māyā*) which Brahman, as a magician (*māyāvin*), draws out of himself, and by which, as magician, he is in no way affected; or by another turn of the picture Brahman becomes through Ignorance (*avidyā*), as the magician by his magic, indistinctly seen. He is the cause of the world as the magician of his magic, and the cause of the withdrawal of the world into his own self, like as the earth draws into itself all living beings.'[2] Well may Dr. K. M. Banerjea say of this sportive act of deception: 'You say the world is a *māyā*, an illusion, and that God is the *māyā*, the Conjurer who thus deceives you. Is it not grossly revolting to our moral feelings to say that God has deliberately projected a false appearance with a view to beguile rational minds of His own creation?'[3]

An eminent Sanskrit scholar, a Christian Hindu, has thus summed up that part of the Vedāntist creed which we have been considering, and which has been held for a thousand years, since the time of Sankarāchārya: 'Brahma, alone—a spirit; essentially existent, intelligence, and joy; void of all qualities and of all acts; in whom there is no consciousness such as is denoted by "I," "thou," and "it"; who apprehends no person or thing, nor is apprehended of any; who is neither parviscient nor omniscient; neither parvipotent nor omnipotent; who has neither beginning nor end; immutable and indefectible—is the

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. i., p. 251.

[2] 'Short Account of Vedānta Philosophy,' p. 13.

[3] 'Dialogues,' p. 398.

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true entity. All besides himself, the entire universe, is false—that is to say, is nothing whatsoever. Neither has it ever existed, nor does it now exist, nor will it exist at any future time.'[1]

The Vedāntic doctrine, then, of God and the world—the antinomy of the Christian—cannot be accepted unless we deny all validity to human reason and our natural convictions and to the evidence of our senses, and all authority to human conscience and the dictates of morality. It is a mere assumption, based on false analogies, and unsupported by any proof. It starts with a Neuter Abstract—an impersonal Brahma—and from that purely mental postulate follows all the irrationality and unreality of the system that grows out of it. The radical difference between the ultimate principles of Vedāntism and Christianity centres in the idea of *personality*. 'The difference of view upon this one question,' it has been well said, 'causes the two systems to diverge from each other through their whole course. It affects the doctrine of the nature and existence of God, of the nature of man, of the state after death, and the entire treatment of morality.'[2] An undifferentiated Infinite cannot possess personality. 'Whether such a being can be called "he" is very doubtful,' says Professor Max Müller; 'for he is neither he nor she; he is It in the very highest sense of that undifferentiated pronoun.'[3] And this, let it be clearly understood, is the boast and glory of the extreme monistic Vedāntist. Professor Deussen says that we should not 'think so low of God as to impute to him personality.'[4]

[1] Nehemiah Goreh's 'Rational Refutation,' p. 176.

[2] 'The Teaching of Swāmi Vivekānanda,' by Rev. E. W. Thompson, M.A., p. vi. (Madras).

[3] 'Rāmakrishna,' p. 90.

[4] 'Short Account,' etc., p. 13.

And Swāmi Vivekānanda declares: 'To the Impersonal we must go at last for the explanation of the personal, for the Impersonal is a much higher generalization than the personal. The Infinite can only be Impersonal, the personal is only limited. . . . We cannot prove the individual by any other means than by referring to the universal, by proving that this individual is a part of the universal. . . . To understand the personal we have to refer always to the Impersonal.' [1]

But this reasoning will scarcely commend itself to the Western mind, since it traverses the highest conclusions of the best philosophic thought. This has to be admitted by even Professor Max Müller, for he says: 'This Vedānta-philosophy seems to solve all difficulties but one; and that is to find a natural approach to it from the position which we occupy in looking at philosophical and religious problems.' [2] And no such 'natural' approach is to be found. The Cause of all things is 'One without a Second'; and 'in order to explain what cannot be doubted, namely, the constant changes in the world by which we are surrounded, Avidyā or Nescience is *called in to explain* what cannot be denied—the variety of our sensations.' [3] 'As I said before, the Vedānta-philosophy is a philosophy of negation; it says, No, no, it says all that the Self is not, but what the Self is defies all words and all thoughts.' [4]

The Impersonal, we are told, is 'a much higher generalization' than the personal; but we are not told how the generalization is arrived at. It is not reached, as we have seen, by any process of inductive reasoning, since the Infinite of the Vedānta is not measured in terms of the finite; and yet the 'one' cannot exist apart from the 'many.' The impersonal can only be higher than the

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii., p. 152.
[2] 'Rāmakrishna,' p. 78.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

personal to minds that have committed themselves to this theory of the universe, because the personal is of necessity regarded as *unreal.* The Ego (the *aham*), which makes the personality, belongs to the world of illusion. But no phenomena can be explained on the hypothesis of absolute unity; there must be thinking minds to which the appearances are real. We cannot pass from the transcendental to the phenomenal; concrete experiences cannot be evolved from the abstract, nor the individual from the universal; for the Unconditional or the Absolute, or whatever else we may call the ultimate Abstraction, are simply the results of mental processes, that admit of no relations, and do not represent any creative movement by which individual existences arise. There must always be insuperable initial perplexities and contradictions in connection with creation in a pantheistic or even purely monotheistic conception of Deity; and only the Christian idea of the Godhead with its active and ethical related states and distinctions can adequately solve the problem of Divine creative, not to speak of redemptive, acts.

Personality is the very highest conception of the human mind; and that universal tendency of life towards personality which we see everywhere around us, together with that crowning achievement of life—persons in relation to each other forming a society—cannot possibly be explained if there is at the heart of things an impersonal principle. That would surely give us an unintelligible world. And so European thought and religion, ever since the time of Socrates, have believed a Self-Conscious Intelligence and Will to be the Supreme Cause of all things, because it is drawn from what is *highest* in the human mind; whereas the Vedāntic conception of Soul—the vital principle of Nature, a purely negative and featureless principle, and which forms its starting-point—is drawn, not

like Intelligence and Will, from what is highest in ourselves, but from that mere vitality common to all the works of Nature alike. For personality—the constituent elements of which are self-consciousness or reason, the power of self-determination or will, and desires that impel us into communion with other persons, or love, the whole of which forms a 'living energy'—is 'the inevitable and necessary starting-point of all human thought.'[1]

'The sense of Ego'—*i.e.*, a conscious person revealed to himself in the ideas of which he is conscious—the *bête noire* of the Hindū and the Buddhist, is the primary reality of life, far more real than the existence of Brahma. We are more absolutely certain of the reality of ourselves than of anything else whatsoever. Indeed, we can only form an idea of existence from this, as a first principle of thought. The ideas of time and space, of matter and force, cause and effect, law and freedom, are only really known to us through the categories of our own personality. Brahma is regarded as Existent, Intelligence, Bliss; that is to say these attributes have been transferred to him in the first instance from the human mind, for we only know them in and through ourselves; and apart from ourselves they can only have an ideal or imaginary existence. In the process of transfer, we have made abstractions of particular aspects of ourselves; and such abstractions must be '*less real than the totality* from which they are taken, and cannot thus be made levers for displacing their own fulcrum.'[2] Unless Brahma be as self-conscious as we are, he is a mere abstraction, and can have no real existence.

And yet our very nature, as rational and spiritual beings, makes it impossible for us to rest in the finite, and leads us, as it has led men in all ages—and none more so than

[1] See Illingworth's 'Personality, Human and Divine,' pp. 40, 41.
[2] See Illingworth's 'Personality, Human and Divine,' p. 43.

the mystic dwellers in India—to appeal from the instability and transiency of earth to an Infinite and Absolute Mind, a centre in which everything rests. We must not, indeed, fail to do justice to the best and spiritual side of this ancient philosophy, which, in its teaching of renunciation, is so at one with the Christian. If we claim reality for ourselves, we must remember that it consists, after all, in surrendering what is merely phenomenal, what relates itself only with the perishing, and in cultivating that side of our being which belongs to the Eternal. For, in Hegel's words, 'Nature and time do not master us, who are spirits, but we them, which are but forms and pass.' Nevertheless, it is true that the Infinite must have its counterpart in the region of our own personality, and can only be interpreted in terms of a person. Self-consciousness, the irresistible conviction of one's own existence as a conscious person—the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, unrecognised in the ancient world—is the foundation of philosophy; and personality being the highest phenomenon known to experience, and belonging to us as *spiritual* and not material beings, has, as such, to be related with whatever is above it. And since the finite implies an infinite, and a dependent effect an independent and undetermined Cause, the God above us and around us must be no unconscious being, but something infinitely more comprehensive than ourselves; an infinite reality and fulness—that is to say, an Infinite Person. It is a necessity of thought that the Supreme Brahma must be the 'I AM'—personality—a living energy—Reason, Will, and Love.

One who has been called an English Kantian of the older school has said: 'It is from the intense consciousness of our own real existence as persons that the conception of reality takes its rise in our minds: it is through that consciousness alone that we can raise ourselves to the

faintest image of the supreme reality of God. What is reality, and what is appearance? is the riddle which philosophy has put forth, from the birthday of human thought; and the only approach to an answer has been a voice from the depths of the personal consciousness: "I think, therefore I am." In the antithesis between the thinker and the object of his thought—between myself and that which is related to me—we find the type and the source of the universal contrast between the one and the many, the permanent and the changeable, the real and the apparent. That which I see, that which I hear, that which I think, that which I feel, changes and passes away with each moment of my varied existence. I, who see and hear and think and feel, am the one continuous self, whose existence gives unity and connection to the whole. Personality comprises all that we know of that which exists; relation to personality comprises all that we know of that which seems to exist. And when from the little world of man's consciousness and its objects we would lift up our eyes to the inexhaustible universe beyond, and ask to whom all this is related, the highest existence is still the highest personality; and the source of all being reveals Himself by His name I AM.'[1]

Now, the essential difference between Vedāntism and Christianity is this, that the first *reads man through Nature*, while the second *reads Nature through man*. We have seen that in Hindū philosophy it is Ignorance, or Māyā, that *makes* the world, whereas the deepest thinker of the West, Emmanuel Kant, says that 'man makes, but he does not *create* Nature.' Man makes Nature because he is made in the image of that Divine Intelligence which is 'the causal explanation of both man and Nature.' Man is the interpreter of Nature, and if man were not, Nature

[1] Mansel's Bampton Lectures, lect. iii.

would not be. If man were to cease to be conscious and to have no ideas, Nature would cease to exist so far as he is concerned; and if there is no conscious life at the heart and head of the universe, if Deity itself is unconscious the universe remains dead, and as good as non-existent. And so we find in Hindūism that the universe is a play—a sport of the Absolute—in which man is ensnared and enslaved. According to the Bible, the universe is a creation for the service of mind. Mind—conscious mind—is everywhere. We live in a reasonable and scientific world. At the uttermost verge of space we find the presence of mind, and the same mind. 'The laws of light and heat and gravitation which obtain in London obtain in the Pleiades.' The universe is intelligible to the mind of man because the same Divine Intelligence created both man and it. 'Nature is God's thought explicit; man is God's thought personified.'

The ancients of India, interpreting man through Nature, attributed to him the qualities of matter, and the fateful forces that govern Nature govern him. His reason and his freedom, instead of being his noblest possessions, his greatest realities, are illusive shams. And so with Brahma, the Source of all; instead of being living and active, in the Christian sense, it is impersonal and passive, an unconscious Substance: Existence, but does not exist; Intelligence, but does not think and reason; Bliss, but cannot enjoy. But read Nature through man, and the qualities found in him will be found in it—intellectual and moral—and in Nature's God; and we have a real universe, full of thought and moral activity, and at its head a living, personal, holy, and loving God. That which explains personal experience explains the universal. Nature cannot be explained by the abstract, but only through the personal; and we must have a personal God before Nature

can be. No 'Neuter Abstract' can explain a rational universe; but behind it must be the rational mind. In the words of one who has recently expounded Christian philosophy to India's sons: 'Face to face Man and Nature stand, and above both, uniting both, the Unity that harmonizes the two, is that Ever-Living Person, that Breathing Spirit, that Thinking Thought, that Conscious Will, that Eternal Life, which we call by many a name—He that lives, moves, breathes everywhere, Personal and Unspent.'[1]

[1] Principal Fairbairn in Madras (*Madras Mail*, February 1, 1899).

CHAPTER VIII

PRACTICAL RESULTS OF VEDANTISM

The Three Schools of Vedāntins—Semitic and Āryan Conceptions of God—Reconciled in Christian Theism—Vedāntism ignores Materialism—Problem of Mind and Matter solved in the Incarnation—Practical Results of a Pantheistic Creed—Ascetic Morality — Gross Sensual Excesses — Caste System — Blind Causation—Atheistic Buddhism—Polytheism—Christ, the only Remedy for Idolatry.

THAT a pantheistic conception of God, such as we have been considering, represents the prevailing religious thought of India from very early times, and is the oldest and most orthodox theology of the Upanishads, was understood by the first great commentator, Sankarāchārya, the authority most generally deferred to in India, and who makes no concessions whatever to realism or dualism. In the most recent works of note, too, such as Gough's 'Philosophy of the Upanishads' and Professor Deussen's 'System of the Vedānta,' the view is maintained that there existed in the beginning only one Vedānta doctrine, handed down by an unbroken series of teachers, and agreeing in all essential points with that contained in Sankara's Bhāshya. This is the rigidly idealistic, monistic, or non-dualistic school of Vedāntins, called in Sanskrit the *Advaita*, or 'no-second'; but in the present day the more practical and accommodating tenets of Rāmānujāchārya,

the famous Vaishnava theologian and philosopher of the twelfth century, and the founder of the *Visishtādvaita* school, or non-duality with a difference—a qualified monism—are also claimed to belong to the Vedānta; and his Sri-bhāshya is the oldest and most important commentary of the Vedānta Sūtras next to Sankara's, and claims to follow the authority of an ancient reputed scholiast, Baudhāyana. Even the out-and-out dualism of Mādhvāchārya, of the fourteenth century, claims to be in possession of some right understanding of the Vedānta, notwithstanding the fact that these three schools differ most radically on points which form the very essence of any philosophy or religion. Of their relative hold on the people of India, Dr. Deussen, in his 'Essay on the Philosophy of the Vedānta,' observes: 'The Vedānta is now, as in ancient time, living in the mind and heart of every thoughtful Hindū. It is true that even here in the sanctuary of Vedāntic metaphysics, the realistic tendencies, natural to man, have penetrated, producing the misinterpreting variations of Sankara's Advaita, known under the names of Visishtadvaita, Dvaita, Shuddhadvaita, of Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha; but India till now has not been seduced by their voices; and of a hundred Vedantins (I have it from a well-informed man, who is himself a zealous adversary of Sankara, and follower of Ramanuja) fifteen perhaps adhere to Ramanuja, five to Madhva, five to Vallabha, and seventy-five to Sankaracharya.'

The second school—the Visishtādvaita—no doubt became a necessity for those who could not deny some reality to the phenomenal world and some individuality to their own souls, the soul and the material world both being regarded as real, and not merely phenomenal modifications of Brahman; that which was potential in Brahman—who possesses within himself good qualities

and the seeds of plurality—becoming real, objective, and independent in the universe and in souls, and constituting, as it were, his body, in which capacity he is spoken of as Īsvara, or a personal Lord; though it held, in common with the *Advaita*, the one totality of Being, and the ultimate union, though not identity, of all with the One.[1]

The *Dvaita*, or strictly dualistic school, of Mādhvāchārya, on the other hand, regards God as supreme and essentially different from the human soul and from the material world, both of which have a real and eternally distinct existence; and it is difficult to see how this last has any right to the name of Vedānta. The non-recognition, however, of these three scholastic sects, and of their several points of divergence, gives rise to much misunderstanding and confusion of thought in discussing with a Hindū, and it is important to know, in any general dealing with the Vedānta, to which sect he belongs.[2]

The second and third schools are for the most part confined to the South of India, where they had their birth, and they date from about the twelfth and fourteenth centuries of our era—a comparatively modern period when there were outside influences existing, such as the ancient Syrian Church and the Roman Catholic community, which may possibly have affected Indian thought. In the North, and throughout the greater part of the country, the monistic school has hitherto held undisputed sway. In the great citadels of Hindū philosophy and religion, as

[1] See Thibaut's 'Vedānta-Sūtras,' Sacred Books of the East Series, vol. xxxiv., introd., pp. 27–31.

[2] A concise summary of these Vedāntic schools is given by Dr. R. G. Bhāndārkar in his report on the search for Sanskrit MSS. in the Bombay Presidency during 1883–84, and a fuller account in Wilson's 'Essays on the Religion of the Hindus.'

Benares, the *Dvaita* school would be regarded as an heterodox sect, though the Vaishnavites, in their popular worship, are equally strong in the North; and it is unquestionable that *Advaita*, or pantheistic thought, pure and simple, has been the orthodox and prevailing creed of India, being, as Swāmi Vivekānanda characterizes it, the *real* Vedānta, 'the fairest flower of philosophy and religion.'

Though there are scattered passages in the Upanishads that may yield a theistic meaning, there would seem to be but one noted treatise that is regarded as specially sectarian—the Svetāsvatara-Upanishad—supposed by some to advocate the Sānkhya, or dualistic, philosophy rather than the Vedānta. But it states distinctly that Nature is *not* an independent power, but a power forming the very self of the Deity; and Professor Max Müller maintains[1] that there is not one passage in it which, if rightly interpreted in connection with the whole text, could be quoted in support of a strictly dualistic theology. And in the present day the monistic and the dualistic schools of thought stand, side by side, opposed and irreconcilable in Hindūism.

It has been stated by the eminent French Professor M. Burnouf, in his 'Science of Religions'—a scholar who gave to Vedic and Buddhist literature, and to the Sanskrit studies of the last forty years, their first impulse—that the original tendency of the Āryan peoples is pantheistic, while monotheism proper is the constant doctrine of the leading Semitic races. These are the two beds in which flow the sacred streams of humanity. The Jews and the Arabs, the descendants of Abraham, observes M. Burnouf, represent the only races that ever conceived God as totally separate from the world, with a personal unity of His own; and

[1] 'The Upanishads,' vol. ii., p. xxxvi.

Christian metaphysics sprang from the contact with, and the mingling of, the two great religious currents on which humanity is rafted—the Jewish and the Āryan.

The Semitic and to a large extent the Old Testament conception of God is realistic, anthropomorphic, and monotheistic, and *removes* Him from the world and man. The Āryan conception of God is philosophical and pantheistic, and thinks of Him as *immanent* in the world and man, and one with them. And it is worthy of the consideration of all thoughtful students of history and religion that *Christian* philosophy, rightly understood—chiefly through its realization of the idea of Incarnation—presents a new and consistent system of religious thought and life, in the mingling of these two great religious streams of the world—the Jewish and the Āryan.

In the pre-Christian religions we see the germs of those conceptions of God and of His relation to the world which find their unity and explanation in the Christian faith. Those conceptions were one-sided, limited, and fragmentary; and so what the monotheistic and the pantheistic faiths of the ancient world were feeling after they failed to reach. Monotheistic systems are imperfect because they exclude the pantheistic element; pantheistic systems are imperfect because they exclude the monotheistic element. A religion that conceives of God as a great and powerful Ruler, exalted far *above* the world, may be morally sublime in its transcendence; but it lacks the element of completeness if it does not combine everything that is Divine, and if it fails to find God immanent *in* the world, pervading it with His thought and life and love. That is the incompleteness, in part, of the Old Testament conception, and the great defect of Islām, its great offshoot. So, again, a religion that sees God *in* all things—the Reality behind all appearances—but has no place for the equally

essential idea of His transcendence *above* the world, will of necessity disclose its weakness, in the loss of finite individuality and freedom, and in the consequent effacement of moral distinctions.

The Christian faith at once comprehends and transcends these earlier religions, by embracing what is true in each, supplementing what is imperfect, and correcting what is false. In the Providence of God, which guides the evolutionary history of the world, it waited till both these conceptions had fully developed themselves, and shown their separate inadequacy; and then, correcting and adding, it fulfilled them both in a perfect synthesis.

It believes in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of the heavens and the earth, who rules men according to a moral law: there is the truth in monotheism. But it also teaches that this Infinite Being is 'not far from each one of us; for *in Him* we live, and move, and have our being' (Acts xvii. 27, 28): there is the truth in pantheism. It teaches that 'God is Love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him' (1 John iv. 16): there, again, is the truth in pantheism, but expressed, not metaphysically, but in the highest ethical and spiritual manner.

The Christian, like the Brāhman, sees God in all things. To Christian thought the world is full of Deity; it is His shrine. Nature is the visible garment of God, through which the Divine glory gleams. In God it exists. In every shining star, in the music of the waves, in the falling shower, in the crystallization of every snowflake, in the glories of sunset, in the wing of the meanest insect, in the flushing petal of the lowliest flower; every object and aspect of Nature is the revelation of a Divine presence, and is instinct with a Divine meaning. Every storm sweeps with the energy of God; every sky is bathed in

the splendour of God; and every human being lives in the life and love of God. As said by the late Dr. R. W. Dale, every one of God's wondrous works is 'as truly the expression of His thought as the painting on the canvas is the expression of the thought of the artist who painted it, and as the musical and majestic verse is the expression of the poet who wrote it.' And, with the deepest insight, Christian thought can discern a soul of goodness and a Divine purpose beneath all the discord and strife, the sorrow and sin, of the world. The Christian sees God in all things—in Nature, and in the history of individuals and of nations; but he does not, as the pantheist, see Him in all things *alike.* He sees a richer revelation of the Divine mind in organized life than in brute matter; a Diviner image in human thought and love than in animal appetite and passion; and he sees Him most fully manifested in the best and highest life the world has seen—in that of Christ.

The Christian holds more firmly the truth of the indwelling God—of the immanence of Deity—immanent in the world, and still more in the spirits He has made in His own image—a truth clearly understood by the Greek Fathers of the Church, but sadly obscured by the Latin; and Tennyson has beautifully expressed it in the lines:

> 'Speak to Him then, for He hears, and Spirit with spirit can meet;
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.'

But he does not *identify* Nature with God, nor the human soul with God; he is neither pantheist nor monotheist, but the Christian theist, who is also the highest philosopher, combining the truth of both. Christian theism does not contradict anything in pantheism, but adds to

it. Pantheism ministers only to the feeling of reverence; theism, while equally exciting this feeling, ministers also directly to the complete moral nature. As Dr. A. C. Fraser maintains in his 'Philosophy of Theism,' it is the deepest and truest interpretation of the actualities of the universe, and, besides being a philosophy, has a practical bearing on human thought and life.

God is exalted far above all finite comprehension, and yet He is here and now; and the spirit of man, in reverent search, may find within the veil of sense 'the vision of Him who reigns.' But Nature's outraying splendour is not the glory of impersonal life but of a great Intelligence and an eternal Will. In one of his poems, 'The Human Cry,' England's great poet has given wonderful expression to what God is, in the truest and most comprehensive concept of man:

> 'Infinite Ideality!
> Immeasurable Reality!
> Infinite Personality!'

And in 'In Memoriam,' when he cherishes the idea of reunion in another life with the friend he had lost, carefully guarding his thought from *ādvaitic* monism, and distinctly confessing dualism, he declares:

> 'Eternal form shall still divide
> The Eternal Soul from all beside,
> And I shall know him when we meet.'

There is one other aspect of our subject, akin to the one we have just considered, and it is this: The thought of the Vedānta being, as we have seen, transcendental and spiritualistic, is as such radically opposed to *materialism;* and herein lies its peculiar strength. It contrasts phenomena with *noumenal* realities. But, true as this conception is, Materialism is a school of thought equally with

Transcendentalism, and cannot be ignored. The material is the *alter ego* of the spiritual, and any scheme that forgets this is doomed. Every error has its uses, and even Materialism has done good service as a corrective of extreme Idealism. Each school emphasizes a truth of the utmost importance; and here, again, a system that would include the truth and exclude the error of each would be of necessity a higher and more comprehensive system than either. A Christian philosophy alone supplies the possibility of such a system.

Materialism fails because it magnifies the physical at the expense of the psychical; Transcendentalism fails because it magnifies the soul at the expense of the body, and all that is akin to it in material form. Any attempt to found an ultimate explanation of the universe on the one exclusively or on the other exclusively is doomed to failure. Man is not pure spirit. A philosophy that is contemptuous of the sensory and of the whole field of activity of the sensory can never be universally accepted. The abstract separation of spiritual and material, with the consequent contempt of the material, was the rock on which Greek philosophy split.

Now, Christianity, properly understood, reconciles these opposing truths, by treating *both* soul and body as equally real and equally essential to the whole and perfect man, the spirit being the life-giving principle, and the body the form in which it finds expression. As Goethe said, 'Matter can never exist or act apart from spirit, neither can spirit apart from matter.' Abundant honour is paid in the New Testament to the body, and to all with which the body is akin. It speaks of Christ being 'magnified in our body' (Phil. i. 20); of our bodies being 'members of Christ' (1 Cor. vi. 15); of 'sinning against one's own body,' because the body is the 'temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. vi.

18, 19); of 'glorifying God in our bodies' (1 Cor. vi. 20); and of 'presenting our bodies a living sacrifice to God' (Rom. xii. 1); and the blessedness of life beyond the grave does not consist in emancipation *from* the body, but in the redemption *of* the body—in the possession of a glorified body (Rom. viii. 23).

The Christian revelation is the Divine solution of the problem of the relationship between spirit and matter. Regard matter as essentially evil, as Eastern systems invariably do, and the material body as only a drag upon the spiritual faculties, which it deadens and deceives—the enemy of man's true life—then it becomes man's highest wisdom and duty, as taught in the Upanishads, to free himself from its trammels and to disregard its necessities. But regard the body as the Divine form under which the spirit appears, then all honour and care and training should be bestowed upon it. And the Christian Incarnation is the theoretical justification of this teaching. It responds to the requirements of the *whole* man, and witnesses to the sacredness of soul and body. God can show Himself as man because He is thus expressing Himself in *His own image*, and, therefore, not only are God and man akin to one another, but the body as well as the spirit is akin to the Divine.

And, further, the Incarnation explains why the Supreme Spirit expresses itself in a material and not an illusory universe. It is part of the Divine order, this manifestation of Himself to the human spirits which He has brought into existence. The Supreme Life does not consist in movements of pure thought—the prevailing idea of the Vedānta—but in an activity that finds expression in a physical agency; and one of the most profound and beautiful teachings of the New Testament is that there is 'one divine event to which the whole creation moves'; that the time is

coming when all Nature will be empowered adequately to render the spiritual meaning which at present it is only able to convey by scattered hints and in broken fragments.[1] Man and the universe as such are real, and not illusory; and if the ancient sages of the Upanishads had understood the mystery of the Christian Incarnation, they might have escaped their philosophic fallacies.

Thus the immortality that Christians are led to look forward to is not that of the soul simply, but of the whole man—soul and spiritual body alike; for Christ has taken a glorified humanity to heaven. Intellect perfected, affections perfected, will perfected, and all gloriously embodied, can we conceive a higher future state of existence than that? The idea of a total loss of them can only proceed, as we shall see hereafter, from a mistaken view of life.

The solution of the 'eternal problem' of mind and matter is thus given in the Christian revelation, which shows us that both enter into the essential nature of the universe. If God, who is Spirit, revealed Himself, not only through a human mind, but also through a human form, then both have received the Divine impress. And since God has chosen to establish a physical medium of communication between spirit and spirit, it must be as indestructible as the spiritual life itself; and we can set no limit to what either may become. In both are Divine possibilities. Science is teaching with increasing clearness that there is an indissoluble union between the psychical and the physical—that body and soul form a unity; and that is the true monism. And the Christian revelation tells us that both form part of the essential constitution of the universe, and that the reason of this union lies in the Divine nature, as disclosed to us in the Incarnation.

[1] See an article on this subject in the *Contemporary Review* for July, 1896, by E. M. Caillard.

If, now, we return to what we have seen to be the prevailing religious thought of India from the earliest times, we shall find that the defects of such a creed could not fail to be followed by some very marked results in the character and life and popular worship of the people.

One practical result would be an *ascetic morality*, and the *Sannyāsin*, or mendicant friar—the lineal descendant of the forest hermit of the Upanishads—the concentrating *Yogi*, would be the highest type of man, whose one aim would be repression and destruction of the individuality, and union with Deity by abstraction from the world, where a transcendental insight becomes accompanied by outward unconsciousness—an 'ecstatic vacuity of mind'—a state in which, if it were possible, every thought would cease. To this we shall return hereafter.

Again, it is difficult at first sight to see anything but a contradiction between this asceticism and a social life in which the *grossest sensual excesses* are perpetrated under the sanction of religion. But in a pantheistic system, where God is alike related to all, and where the loftiest virtue and the lowest appetites are alike consecrated by a Divine and universal presence, moral distinctions necessarily disappear, and natural passions carry with them their own sanctions. We cannot be held responsible for affections and actions that are only states and operations of the Divine nature; and so, according to Swāmi Vivekānanda, 'our evil is of no more value than our good, and our good of no more value than our evil.' [1]

And, further, seeing that whatever is, according to pantheism, is, by the very fact that it is, right and Divine, Professor Caird is surely correct when he maintains [2] that such a system accounts for all that is so reprehensible in

[1] *Brahmavādin*, January 19, 1897.
[2] 'The Faiths of the World,' lect. i.

caste, whose root is pride and whose branches are selfishness. Instead of being, as we should at first suppose, an equalizing faith, pantheism has 'a tendency to consecrate existing facts, to harden accidental differences and inequalities into permanent and inviolable divisions.' Social distinctions of rank and occupation, which are common to all countries, but whose defects are in the West corrected by religion—a religion of equality and brotherhood in the sight of God—have in India been consecrated by religion; and the dark and hopeless lot of millions of low-caste men has been itself regarded as 'an unchangeable ordinance of God.'

What binds Hindūism to India in its caste system denies it to humanity. And yet what should be the logical effect of a monistic creed which holds that the individual Self and the Supreme are one? Surely the greatest reverence shown to *all* men, without distinction. If men are things, let them go the way of things; but if they are spirits, temples of the Eternal, let us bow before one another—let us try to serve one another. If men and women are Divine, according to the Vedānta, how can we treat any fellow-creature with contempt? To the Christian human nature, in its most degraded forms, is something wonderful and sacred, because in Christ it has been taken up into eternal union with the nature of God. How has it been in India? How can we harmonize this exalted truth of the identity of man and God with the treatment that the lower and oppressed classes have for ages received at the hands of the higher? Why does the high-caste Brāhman avoid, as he would a leper, contact with a non-caste pariah? The Hindū philosopher's lofty ideal has never been his realization. Where there is only one Self of the universe, love, it is said, becomes a natural expression of such a philosophy; for how can any man hate his own Self?[1] I must love my

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii., 190.

brother because I *am* my brother—because the Soul within all men is the same. But it is not as separate personalities that we are all one, for the idea of separateness is illusory and has to be destroyed. 'The so-called separate Souls are simply the *Ātman* under phenomenal limitations, and therefore it is superfluous to postulate the existence of many souls.'[1] So that the expression, the 'brotherhood of man' —a purely Christian conception arising out of the Divine Fatherhood—is altogether misleading on the lips of a Vedāntist, since it implies distinction of persons, and, if applied to man, is equally applicable to the whole animate and inanimate creation, because the one Soul underlies all. It is not brotherhood, but identity. One of the best signs of a new life in India to-day is the healthy desire to abolish, among other crying evils, the great caste system; and this can hardly be brought about by *a revival of that philosophy* which for centuries has sanctioned and nourished caste. True brotherhood, on the other hand, is an essential doctrine of Christianity, and is practically exemplified in numberless measures to improve the lot of man, and, in a very marked manner, in the unity and fellowship of believers in the Christian Church.

Again, an impersonal Deity, such as we have in the pantheistic Vedānta, means an *impersonal order* of things in the universe, in which blind causation and natural law or mechanism rule over a *necessitated man;* and we have the fundamental belief of Hindūism, which underlies all Hindū thought, and furnishes the *raison d'être* of the systems of philosophy—the doctrine of *Karma* and *transmigration;* and these will be fully considered at a later stage of our inquiry.

The same reflection applies to the system of *Buddhism*, which was the grand logical outcome of pantheism. Re-

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii., 190.

jecting the Brāhmanical Deity, who brought a curse rather than a blessing into human existence, Buddha boldly rejected God altogether. 'Deny the personality of God,' Principal Fairbairn has said, 'and the best thing for the race is to deny God; the best thing for the person, escape from personal to those impersonal modes of being which are the dreariest everlasting death.'[1] History has never exhibited a more signal instance of the failure of pantheism, with its cold, abstract, impersonal force, to satisfy man's deepest needs. Break away from the thought of a Divine Being, who can *do* something to relieve the pain and misery of the world, and atheism is the best alternative, and the highest beatitude for man loss of conscious being.

And, once more, it is difficult at first sight to see anything but a contradiction between the doctrine that God is the only one Reality and the monstrous mythology—the vast system of *polytheism*—which in India has grown up by the side of it.

A belief in the unity of God, as the Bible understands it, does, indeed, utterly forbid anything approaching to a plurality of gods: 'no relic of polytheism and idolatry could possibly live in the Hebrew fiery furnace of monotheism, any more than dry chaff could exist in lambent tongues of fire.' And that is simply because the Divine unity in the Bible is *not* a pantheistic unity. But the unity of pantheism is not hostile to polytheism; on the contrary, it inevitably induces it, and is supplemented by it, and has in India gradually swelled the thirty-three gods of the Vedas to 330,000,000, quite in accordance with the name given to God—Brahma—that which expands through all space, and 'grows' into everything. A Being who is thought of as the Substance underlying all finite things stands, as we have seen, in the same relation to all, to the

[1] 'City of God,' p. 266.

meanest as well as to the highest, to the most repulsive and impure as well as to the noblest and the holiest. Pantheistic thought can take no account of distinctions in the finite. And so while the philosophic sage might, by a process of abstraction, penetrate to the essence behind, and see the One in the many, the popular mind, incapable of such exercises, would take of necessity the opposite direction, and instead of deifying nothing would deify all. Since all is equally related to God, He is manifested alike in the highest and most beautiful, and in the lowest and the vilest; and so even loathsome forms of organic life—the lowest fetich—become objects of religious reverence. This is, as we have seen, the philosophy of polytheism and idolatry.

If pantheism has sometimes been the creed of the philosopher, it has never been the faith of a nation; polytheism and image-worship have ever been the religion of the people. The abstractions of pantheism, which has no object of worship, and whose subject of contemplation is incomprehensible, devoid of all affections, and indifferent to all actions, whose Absolute Being has no personal attributes, can have no attractions for the common people, and nothing to elicit and sustain a real religious life. From Job to Herbert Spencer, who sees Power infinite and inexhaustible, but uncharacterized by any element on which the human heart can repose, God has been the undiscovered One. So far from knowing the way to God, the philosophers have not been even sure of His name. The Unknowable, Absolute, Brahma, 'Stream of tendency,' are poor substitutes for the Living God and Father. 'The Vedantic God,' says the Madras Hindū, 'is a cold, dreary, philosophic conception, which the Hindū masses have never cared for, which the vast majority of mankind can never be brought to reverence and which is quite incapable

of influencing them in the formation of character and life.'[1] What is the consequence? Pantheism has to crave the help of polytheism, and to allow the masses to regard as real what it declares to be illusory, and to personify what it holds to be impersonal, in order that the instinctive feelings of the heart—love, gratitude, and trust—may be expressed in worship. 'Whoever, hearing that the Vedāntins believe in Brahma without qualities, infers that they reject Vishnu, Sīva, and the rest of the pantheon, and that they discountenance idolatry and such things, and that they count the Purānas and similar writings false, labours under gross error.'[2] 'It is the personal gods of Hindū polytheism, and not the impersonal principle of Hindū pantheism, that the Hindū people worship. No people can worship what they believe to be entirely impersonal.'[3]

It is sometimes represented as an excellence of Vedāntism that it thus incorporates these lower phases of religion, and that the pantheistic idea tends to purify the mind, and helps it to rise from a lower to a higher level—from the worship of the *saguna* Deity under his many forms to the knowledge of the *nirguna* Brahma. But it can only do this, as Professor Flint shows,[4] at the cost of its own rationality, and by being consciously allied with falsehood, since the popular deities are, according to the Vedānta, mere fictions of the popular mind. Pantheism, instead of correcting Hindū polytheism, has had the effect of stimulating its extravagances; it has increased the number and absurdity of its superstitions. Pantheism and an impersonal Deity can never be superior to theism and faith in a personal God, when it is thus found to stand at the head of a history of irretrievable idolatry. And vast systems of

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. ii., 141.
[2] 'Rational Refutation,' p. 195.
[3] 'Anti-Theistic Theories,' p. 389.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 390.

mythology and superstition inevitably accompany pantheistic thought. It was so in ancient Greece and Rome, and it has been so in India; and it must be so in every land that is not Christian. Only where the Bible is known is idolatry, in one form or another, unknown; and when Christ is accepted by a people idolatry passes away.

What is the explanation of this? Idolatry, as opposed to pantheism, foolish and degraded as it is, lays supreme stress on a vital truth—a truth which the human heart will never surrender—the Personality of God. It witnesses to man's natural craving to have before him some manifestation of the Unseen—the Unknowable—to see, in fact, a humanized God. It seeks to realize to the senses what otherwise is only an idea. And nothing but a religion that offers a visible and Divine Object for adoring reverence—a true and worthy *Image* of the Divine—as does Christianity, that presents to us God realized in human history, can save, and has ever saved, a people from idolatry. It is at best in Hindūism a necessary evil; hence the system with which it is allied must be regarded as unsound. In Christianity, it is not only condemned as an evil, but is found to be altogether unnecessary, its place being taken by the perfect, elevating, all-lovely, and Divine Image—Christ.

In Christianity it is the Incarnation, as we have seen, that is the centre of its thought and action, and this affords the same religious test to philosopher and peasant, to the high and to the low. There is a philosophy of the profoundest kind surrounding Christian doctrine, available for the mystic or the metaphysician; but there is *one* Object of worship and devotion—*God in Christ*—for all; one universal Book, the Bible, understood by all; and but one way of salvation, revealed in that Book, alike for all—

perfect trust in, and absolute surrender to, Christ, as the Revelation of Deity and the atonement for human sin, in whom and by whom we are brought into union and harmony with the Divine. It is this that gives to Christianity its simplicity, its adaptability, its universality.

CHAPTER IX

THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

The Bhagavad-gītā—Its Eclectic, Conciliatory, though Sectarian, Character—Its Place in the Mahābhārata—Development of Krishna Cult—Question of Christian Influence considered—Chief Incident of the Poem—Its Main Doctrines, Compromises, and Inconsistencies—Its Treatment of the Veda—Krishna as an Incarnation—Transmigration and Methods of Salvation—Bhakti-yoga—Hindū and Christian—Gītā no Safe Guide.

THE insufficiency of a pantheistic creed, and the *need of some Object of worship and devotion* in which the heart may rest, are shown very clearly in the Bhagavad-gītā, the most popular devotional book of the thoughtful classes of India. Its main teaching is that men's devotion (*bhakti*) must be directed to a person—to Krishna, the *Ishta Devata*—as a representative of the Supreme, with the additional quality of a Redeemer. It arose from a fusion of the transcendental and popular elements, both of which had existed all along in Hindūism. It seeks to combine the mystic pantheism of the Vedānta with an attractive mythology, and hence its popularity. The doctrine of Krishna regarding his own nature is the pantheistic doctrine of the early Upanishads, but differing materially in his embodiment; for in the Upanishads the Supreme Spirit is not represented as *incarnate* in a human person, nor made the object of

passionate devotion, but rather the subject of calm contemplation, in which the absence of all emotion is essential to the final deliverance of the perfected soul.

The 'Divine Lay,' or 'Lord's Song,' as it is called, is a poem of much grace and sweetness, with many noble sentiments beautifully expressed, besides being a work of great metaphysical acumen. Schlegel has described it as 'the finest philosophical poem in the world.' Still, it contains nothing new that can be formulated into a complete and consistent system of its own. It is rather all-comprehensive, and therefore of necessity contradictory. It is pantheistic in that it represents Krishna as the one real Existence, and theistic in representing him as a personal Being, the Creator and Upholder of all that is. Further, by teaching that whatever is worshipped, Krishna is worshipped; that 'They also who worship other gods with devotion and faith, they also worship me,'[1] it justifies the existence of the Hindū pantheon and the grossest forms of animism. It is, thus, an eclectic poem, the author being a master of compromise.

Besides the concession already indicated, its aim was to harmonize the doctrines of the chief systems of philosophy, the scientific principles of the Sānkhya, the asceticism of the Yoga—though discouraging its extravagances—and the idealism of the Vedānta. It also sought to conciliate the different religious sects by uniting them in the common worship of Krishna, though showing itself to be, at the same time, distinctly sectarian by exalting Vaishnavism, whose adherents regard it as one of their most sacred text-books. Its subject-matter shows that it was composed when Buddhism was on the wane, and when the hostile rivalry between Vaishnavites and Saivites, restrained so long as their common foe, Buddhism, was supreme, had

[1] Gītā, ix. 23.

commenced, and which brought about the production of the sectarian Purānas in later centuries of our era. The author manifests his sectarian bias by ignoring the god Siva altogether, declaring that he is the 'Rudra of the Rudras'—the most terrible of the terrible—and by identifying Krishna with Vishnu as the Supreme Deity. Beyond the element of personal devotion (*bhakti*) to a manifested Deity, it contains no teaching that is not found in the Upanishads and the philosophical systems; so that our examination of the doctrines of the Vedānta generally is equally an examination of the teaching of the Bhagavad-gītā. No very prolonged study of it, therefore, is required.

It lies embedded as an important episode in the Bhīshma Parva of the Mahābhārata—the great epic of the Hindūs—a book of 'widely distant periods,' some portions of it being said to have existed in the second or third century B.C., while its present redaction, which includes many interpolations, was probably not completed until 'some centuries after the commencement of our era.'[1] The Gītā itself, which is proved by its style and eclectic philosophy to be the most modern portion, is placed by Professor Wilson as low as 800 A.D.; by Professor M. Monier Williams, in his 'Indian Epic Poetry,' to a date long subsequent to the Christian era; while Thomson, a modern editor and translator of the poem,[2] thinks it may have been written before 300 A.D.

The Mahābhārata is the earliest poem in which Krishna's life is narrated, and the 'great war' of the descendants of Bhārata—the Pāndava and Kaurava cousins—which forms the nucleus of the epic, is generally agreed by scholars to

[1] See Weber's History of Indian Literature,' p. 188, and Muir's 'Sanskrit Texts,' iv. 169.

[2] Charles Wilkins English translation, made at Benares in 1784, first made the Gītā known to European scholars.

have taken place about 800 B.C. The *composition* of the epic, however, in which the events are recorded, having taken place some 400 or 500 years later—for Buddhism is spoken of as a powerful system—the narrative of Krishna's life as contained in the Gītā cannot be regarded as affording any reliable historical evidence of the life itself. The author was no eye-witness to the events he relates. The several stages in the development of the Krishna cult, as traceable in the Mahābhārata, are very marked; but owing to the redactions, of which the poem possesses abundant internal evidence, it presents many inconsistencies and contradictions about the character of the hero. In the briefest and, therefore, probably the earliest series of stories, Krishna is represented simply as an heroic man, remarkable for superhuman strength. In every moral quality he is much inferior to Arjuna, the real hero of the story, the prince of the Pāndavas, and who is married to Krishna's sister. In the more elaborate narrative he appears as a demigod, and later on as an incarnation of Vishnu; while in the Bhagavad-gītā he is represented as the Supreme Being, the Soul of the world, the primeval Spirit whose material form is the universe.

Thus, a great gulf separates the Krishna of the earlier from the Krishna of the later date, and, again, the more theosophic Krishna of the Gītā from the purely mythological Krishna of the Purānas. But it must be borne in mind that it is the *same* Krishna, who, in the Dronaparva, advises the Pāndavas to try to kill Drona by foul means, as it would be impossible to kill him by fair,[1] and elsewhere urges Bhīma, one of the Pāndavas, to tell Drona a falsehood, that his son was dead, with the object that, being overcome by grief, he would cease to fight, who in various other places is declared to be a Divine incarnation! Well may Professor

[1] Mahābhārata, ix. 3445 *et seq.*

A. Holtzmann remark : ‘ What fatality impelled the Indians to elevate such a man into an incarnation of the Supreme Deity is an, as yet, unsolved enigma. There must have been powerful political as well as religious revolutions which brought about this result.’ [1] Further, the legends of Krishna’s birth, the celebration of his birthday, in the honour of which his mother Devakī participates, his boyish freaks and amours, and his life as a herdsman, as described in the Vaishnava Purānas, chiefly the Bhāgavata, ascribed by Colebrooke to the twelfth century,[2] are the furthest removed from the original representations of the epic.

All this has led some eminent Sanskrit scholars to the belief that the Krishna cult is indebted to Christian legends, which found their way to India, and were there modified to suit Indian modes of thought, since the gulf between the earlier and later stages cannot well be bridged except by the supposition of some external influence. This opinion has been strengthened by certain resemblances in the Bhagavad-gītā to some of the ideas and expressions of the New Testament, and especially by the appearance and strong enforcement of the novel doctrine of *bhakti*, as distinguished from the *jnānā-kānda* of the Upanishads, and the older *shraddhā* of the Rig-veda. Some of the more striking texts of the Indian poem that readily recall parallel ones of the Bible are the following: ‘They who devoutly worship me are in me, and I in them’ (ix. 29). ‘Repose thy mind upon me, fix thine understanding on me : then doubtless thou shalt abide in me on high hereafter’ (xii. 8). ‘Renouncing all dharmas, come unto me alone for shelter ; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins’ (xviii. 66).

[1] ‘Arjuna, Ein Beitrag Qur Reconstruction des Mahâbhârata,’ von Adolf Holtzmann. (Strassburg, Karl J. Trübner ; London, Trübner and Co., 1879.

[2] ‘Miscellaneous Essays,’ i. 94.

Dr. Lorinser, in 1869, in his appendix to his German translation of the Gītā, expressed the opinion that Christian ideas had been borrowed by the Brāhmans, and that the poem was indebted to the Bible. Professor Weber, while regarding Dr. Lorinser's attempt to establish such a connection as 'overdone,' has yet stated that 'the reciprocal action and mutual influence of Gnostic and Indian conceptions in the first centuries of the Christian era are evident, however difficult it may be at present to say what in each is peculiar to it or borrowed from the other.'[1] On the other hand, this position has been stoutly disputed by Dr. Lassen and Professor Windisch, of Heidelberg, as well as by Mr. Justice K. T. Telang, of Bombay, in a lengthy introductory essay prefixed to his English metrical translation of the Gītā, published in 1875, and where the question of the originality or otherwise of the poem is fully and fairly treated. Dr. J. Muir, who ably discusses the whole subject in his 'Metrical Translation from Sanskrit Writers,'[2] considers Dr. Lorinser's contention as 'not proven,' or '*adhuc sub judice*'; and Professor M. Monier Williams would seem to be of the same opinion. However the case may be, there can be no doubt that the Gītā is a thoroughly Oriental book, cast in an Indian mould, and Indian throughout—that there is nothing essentially common between it and the New Testament, but, on the contrary, that the ideas of the former are quite foreign to those of the latter, while no such conception as Krishna suffering for the sins of mankind is anywhere to be found. Further, that though the resemblance between certain passages may be striking, it is, after all, superficial; and a little reflection will show that the one has marked traits which the other has not, while a different translation of certain words, of which Sanskrit is peculiarly susceptible, will often give an entirely different meaning.

[1] 'Indian Antiquary,' iv. 79.

[2] See Introduction.

Returning now to the body of the work, we must glance at the supreme incident that gave rise to Sri Krishna's deliverances. The leaders of the two great families, who had long been at feud, are about to engage in a decisive battle. The Supreme Being, who had become incarnate in the family of the Pāndavas, in the person of Krishna, acts as Arjuna's charioteer, and drives him to the battlefield. The compassionate heart of Arjuna melts at the sight before him.

'Teachers, fathers, sons, as well as grandfathers, mothers' brothers, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and other relatives. These I do not wish to kill, though (myself) slain, even for the sake of the kingship of the three worlds; how then for earth! . . . It is not proper to kill the sons of Dhritarāshtra, our relatives, for how, killing our kinsmen, may we be happy, O Mādhava?'[1]

And then, for the rest of the poem, the battle is suspended, and in that unlikely situation the two hold prolonged converse on the most recondite doctrines of philosophy and religion. The generous sentiments of Arjuna are repudiated by Krishna in verses that are in a way sublime and beautiful, and that, from a pantheistic view of the world, point out the folly of all dread of death, and the duty of energy and resignation, but which, judged by the moral sense of mankind, are more than sufficient to deprive the Gītā of any claim to be regarded as a Divine revelation.

'Know THAT to be indestructible by whom all this is pervaded. Nor can any work the destruction of that imperishable One. These bodies of the embodied One, which is eternal, indestructible, and boundless, are known as finite. Therefore fight, O Bhārata. He who regardeth the dweller in the body as a slayer, and he who thinketh it is slain, both of them are ignorant. It slayeth not, nor is it slain.

[1] Gītā, i. 34, 35, 37.

It is not born, nor doth it die: nor having been, ceaseth it any more to be: unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, it is not slain when the body is slaughtered. . . . Further, looking upon thine own dharma, thou shouldest not tremble; for there is nothing more welcome to a Kshatriya than righteous war. . . . But if thou wilt not carry on this righteous warfare, then, casting away thine own dharma and thine honour, thou wilt incur sin. . . . Slain, thou wilt obtain Svarga (heaven); victorious, thou wilt enjoy the earth; therefore stand up, O son of Kuntī, resolute to fight.'[1]

It will be observed that Krishna's arguments are not based on the justice of the war, but *on transcendental doctrines* regarding the impassive and immortal constitution of the soul—teaching which would be equally applicable to the most unrighteous warfare, and, indeed, to murder generally; and teaching which, in recent years, has gone dangerously near to inciting and justifying seditious acts in India. Then Krishna urges the slaughter on another ground. It is the duty of a soldier of the Kshatriya or warrior caste to fight. The *institution of caste is everywhere upheld* in the Gītā, and the necessity of performing its duties is one of the chief aims of the author. 'The four castes emanated from Me, by the different distribution of energies and actions; know Me to be the author of them, though the actionless and inexhaustible.'[2] The Creator of all is thus the 'Author' of a system that has done more to alienate one class from another and to stifle the feelings of human brotherhood than any other, and which is now acknowledged by Hindūs themselves to be the root of the worst evils of the land.

Buddhism, while it had encouraged atheism and denied the existence of the soul, had brought deliverance to the priest-ridden and caste-ridden communities of India. In relaxing the duties of caste, it had done much to destroy the profession of the Kshatriyas, and had further disin-

[1] Gītā, ii. 17–20, 31, 33, 37.

[2] *Ibid.*, iv. 13.

tegrated society by allowing all persons who desired it to become ascetics. The author of the Gītā, himself a Brāhman, rallied the warriors to their calling by teaching that caste was a Divine institution, and that the fulfilment of its duties would provide an 'open door to heaven'; and this counterblast to the Buddhist heresy not only fixes the comparatively modern date of the poem—the persecution of Buddhism being in active operation during the fifth and sixth centuries of our era—but helps us to see something of the political motive that led the author to make use of the supernatural medium of the Mahābhārata for the exposition of his philosophy. But if caste be a Divine and stereotyped institution, there is no limit to its obligations, and descendants of hereditary robbers and murderers, such as the Indian Thugs, would be justified in following the profession of their fathers. Further, if fighting and slaying are lawful because they are caste duties, there is an end to all moral constraint. Bishop Caldwell has well said: 'Krishna's teaching on these heads elevates the conventional duties of the institutions of a dark age above the essential distinction between right and wrong; and we may freely assert that Arjuna's *human*—it may well be styled *humane*—compassion and generosity is far preferable to the strong-hearted philosophy which Krishna professes to be Divine. It is poison administered in honey.'[1] And it may be safely said that nothing but party and political bias could ever suggest such teaching.

The Gītā doctrine of God would seem to be that of the older Upanishads rather than the strictly Advaita doctrine of the Vedānta. He is the Soul of the world, its material as well as its efficient Cause, the universe being an evolution of Himself; and at the end of a *Kalpa*, or age, dissolving into His all-containing self. 'Know THAT (the neuter

[1] 'Krishna and the Bhagavad-gītā,' Madras (C. L. S.).

Abstract) to be indestructible by whom all this is pervaded.' 'I am the going forth of the whole universe, and likewise its dissolving.' 'All this is woven in me as multitudes of jewels on a string.' 'Know me as the eternal seed of all beings.'[1] According to this pantheistic teaching, as we have seen, the basest forms of creation are Divine, and the most immoral actions, not only permitted, but perpetrated by Deity itself. Unlike the Upanishads, however, the Divine Being has a dual nature, revealing himself to Arjuna in his supreme form, and, again, in an extravagant passage, the pupil beholding him in a lower nature, answering to the Prakriti of Kapila, and as possessed, moreover, of countless faces, mouths, and eyes, and arms, all blazing like a thousand suns,[2] thereby resembling the Purānic description of the Deity as a great mundane animal. But this *attempted blending of pantheism and polytheism* lands the author in fatal contradiction. 'Those without buddhi (intellect) think of me, the unmanifest, as having manifestation; they know not my supreme nature, imperishable, most excellent.'[3] And yet the unmanifested becomes manifest in the most striking manner.

The same inconsistency appears in the *attempt to harmonize the different schools of philosophy*, especially the Sānkhya and the Vedānta. The metaphysics of the Sānkhya as regards Purusha and Prakriti are adopted. 'Know that Prakriti (matter in its widest sense) and Purusha (soul) are both without beginning; and know thou also that modifications and qualities are all Prakriti-born.'[4] That is to say, the different qualities of men, higher or lower, refined or base, are the result of the three *gunas*—goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*), and darkness (*tamas*)—the ingredients or constituent elements of which Prakriti or

[1] Gītā, vii. 6, 7, 10.
[2] *Ibid.* xi. 16, 17.
[3] *Ibid.* vii. 24.
[4] *Ibid.* xiii. 19.

Nature is constituted.[1] But there are said to be *two kinds* of Prakriti, which is an essential change. 'Earth, water, fire, air, ether,' etc. 'This the inferior. Know my other Prakriti, the higher, the life-element, by which the universe is upheld.'[2] And in order to further reconcile the Sānkhya and the Vedānta, the doctrine of a Supreme Being presiding over Prakriti and Purusha is added, which is a fundamental alteration. 'Spectator and permitter, supporter, enjoyer, the great Īsvara, thus is styled the supreme Self—in this body the supreme Purusha.'[3] Moreover, by declaring that *all qualities, whether good or bad, proceed from Krishna*, the distinctions of virtue and vice are again obscured, and moral responsibility paralyzed. 'The natures that are Sāttvic, Rājasic, Tāmasic, these know as from me; not I in them, but they in me.'[4]

Further, the all-comprehensive Gītā teaches the purely Vedāntic *doctrine of Māyā*, which has been already considered. 'Though unborn, the imperishable Self, and also the Lord of all beings, ruling over Nature, which is mine own, yet I am born through my own Māyā.' 'This Divine Māyā of mine, Guna-made, is hard to pierce; they who come to me, they cross over this Māyā.' 'Nor am I of all discovered, enveloped in my Yoga-Māyā. This deluded world knoweth me not, the unborn, the imperishable.'[5]

One is inclined to ask if the Gītā's distinctive doctrine of *avatāras*, or incarnations, is also Māyā, or illusion. If real, no more unsuitable character could have been chosen to represent the Supreme, and to become the great destroyer of sin and the deliverer of the world. Krishna is represented as saying: 'As often as there is a decline of virtue

[1] This subject is further treated in the chapters on Karma and Transmigration.

[2] Gītā, vii. 4, 5. [3] *Ibid.*, xiii. 22. [4] *Ibid.*, vii. 12.

[5] *Ibid.*, iv. 6; vii. 14, 25.

or an increase of vice in the world, I create myself anew; and thus I appear from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and establishment of virtue.' [1] And, again, in words that seem to be almost an echo of the Gospel: 'Renouncing all dharmas, come unto me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins.' [2] There could not be a more complete contrast between these signs of a true incarnation and what we learn elsewhere to have been the whole tone and course of Krishna's life. The Bhāgavata Purāna is said to have been related by a sage to a king, who, after listening to the account of Krishna's debaucheries, inquired how it was that he who became incarnate for the 'establishment of virtue' and the repression of vice could have been guilty of such corrupt practices. The reply was: 'The transgression of virtue and the daring acts which are witnessed in superior beings must not be charged as faults to these glorious persons. . . . Let no other than a superior being ever even in thought practise the same.' [3] In spite of this excellent advice, there cannot be a doubt that people have followed Krishna's steps, and that the same character which in the Gītā is set forth as the Divine one, has fouled the imagination and stained the purity of many minds and households. It has been aptly said that 'the Krishna of the Bhagavadgītā was bound to appear for the destruction of such characters as the Krishna of the Bhāgavata.' But, at the best, nowhere is the amazing superiority of Christianity over Hindūism more manifest than in the character of their respective incarnations, the fair Figure of the Gospels being not only historically real, but the perfection of reason and the summit of all religious truth, and rising in moral purity and self-devotion, not simply above the level of

[1] Gītā, iv. 7, 8. [2] *Ibid.*, xviii. 66.

[3] 'Bhāgavata Purāna,' X. xxxiii. 27–40.

ordinary human nature, but far above the highest and best in ourselves, till we find that we can form no worthier conception of God Himself than we have in the face and character of Jesus Christ.

The fundamental defect of the Gītā, therefore, from the Christian standpoint is that it nowhere exhibits any sense of the real evil of sin as a violation of moral government, and makes no provision whereby sin may be justly forgiven, and its thraldom and guilt removed. No Divine grace and truth are revealed which have any power to renew and sanctify the soul.

Though accounted orthodox, its attitude towards the previous Vedic revelation and its doctrine of sacrifice, with which it might be supposed to claim some continuity, is surprising; for, though originally imparted by the breath Divine, it is set aside as quite inferior science. But one revelation cannot thus lightly degrade another. 'A flowery doctrine, promising the reward of works performed in this embodied state, presenting numerous ceremonies, with a view to future gratification and glory, is prescribed by unlearned men, devoted to the injunctions of the Veda, assertors of its exclusive importance, lovers of enjoyment, and seekers after paradise. The restless minds of the men who, through this flowery doctrine, have become bereft of wisdom and are ardent in the pursuit of future gratification and glory are not applied to contemplation. The Vedas have for their objects the three qualities (or *gunas*); but be thou, Arjuna, free from them. . . . As great as is the use of a well which is surrounded on all sides by overflowing waters, so great (and no greater) is the use of the Veda to a Brāhman endowed with true knowledge.'[1]

The salvation the Gītā teaches is not a salvation from sin, but from the bondage of repeated births—the complete

[1] Translation in Muir's Sanskrit Texts of ii. 42–46.

separation of spirit from matter. The grand dogma of the Gītā, as it is of the Upanishads and of all the schools of Hindū philosophy, ancient and more modern, is that of *Karma and transmigration*, or the inevitable fruit of action in this life and in countless others. Governed as man is in all his actions by the three *gunas*—properties inherent in his nature—such actions, good or bad, give of necessity fresh birth to the soul ; and desire and passion, which give rise to action, must be suppressed and destroyed before the soul can obtain final deliverance. With such fatalism underlying the whole system of things, it is difficult to see any place for a redeemer such as Krishna offers himself to be, or any room for interference with inexorable law. Law and mercy find no consistent reconciliation ; reason points one way, and the heart another ; pantheism can know no mediator.

A few verses will be quoted descriptive of this doctrine of Karma and transmigration, which Professor Wilson says is 'the main principle of all Hindū metaphysics, the foundation of all Hindū philosophy'; while the full consideration of the subject will occupy later chapters. 'As a man casting off worn-out garments taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new.' 'Many births have been left behind by me and by thee, O Arjuna. I know them all, but thou knowest not thine.' 'Having attained to the worlds of the pure-going, and having dwelt there for eternal years, he who fell from Yoga is reborn in a pure and blessed house : or else he is born into a family of intelligent Yogis; but such a birth as that is hard to obtain in this world.' 'At the close of many births the man full of wisdom cometh unto me.' 'They who strive for liberation from birth and death, refuged in me, they know Brahman, that whole, Adhyātma, and all Karma.'

'The expansion that causes the birth of beings is named Karma.' 'He whose buddhi (intellect) is everywhere unattached, the self subdued, dead to desires, he goeth to the supreme perfection of freedom from Karma by renunciation.'[1]

Various methods are thus prescribed by which the soul may obtain salvation, and oneness with Krishna be attained. Energetic action is enjoined in one place, extreme quietism in another; elsewhere the method of knowledge or wisdom is advocated; and crowning all is the *bhakti* doctrine, or personal devotion and faith. While admitting, as a Brāhman would, the supreme place held by knowledge in the Sānkhya and Vedānta systems, and the place of mortification in the Yoga of Patanjali, the author yet frequently insists on the superiority of the Karma-Yoga, or salvation by works. It is evident that the reason for this was, as we have seen, to recall the Kshatriyas to their necessary duties—one of the chief objects of the poem; but, in order to harmonize it with the other doctrines, it is carefully guarded by further teaching, in which there is much truth beautifully expressed, and quite in accordance with Christianity. Actions are to be disinterested, and not performed for the sake of reward. 'Therefore, without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty; for, performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme.' 'The harmonized man, having abandoned the fruit of action, attaineth to everlasting peace; the non-harmonized, impelled by desire, attached to fruit, are bound.'[2] And yet we read: 'Having abandoned all attachment to the fruit of action, always content, seeking refuge in none, although doing actions, he is not doing

[1] Gītā, ii. 22; iv. 5; vi. 41, 42; vii. 19, 29; viii. 3; xviii. 49.
[2] *Ibid.*, iii. 19; iv. 12.

anything'—where action in itself is depreciated, and renunciation of action would seem, after all, to be the higher way. And, again: 'Far lower than Buddhi-Yoga is action.'[1] 'With these perplexing words thou only confusest my understanding,' pleaded the pupil; and so Krishna said: 'In this world there is a twofold path . . . that of Yoga by knowledge—of the Sānkhyas; and that of Yoga (union) by action—of the Yogis.'[2] And, after declaring, 'Even if thou art among all evil men the most evil-doing, yet shalt thou escape from all sin by the raft of wisdom,' the palm goes in the end to the Yogi. 'The Yogi is greater than the ascetics; he is thought to be greater than even the wise; the Yogi is greater than the men of action; therefore become thou a Yogi, O Arjuna.'[3] But we are not told how Arjuna was to practise Yoga on the battlefield, and slay his kinsmen at the same time, so difficult is it to harmonize conflicting methods of piety.

The Yoga of Patanjali expressed the act of concentrating the mind in abstract meditation, and this was to be effected by 'the suppression of the transformations or modifications of the thinking principle.' It was the means by which the most extraordinary occult and magical powers were to be attained, through processes of extreme asceticism, which have reached their legitimate development in the inflictions and aberrations of the Bhairāgis and Sāktas of Bengal. In the Gītā, however, the Yoga philosophy is stripped of its distinctive features for the sake of compromise and in order to secure the semblance of unity with other theories, and appears in a more refined and rational form, as a contemplative quietism not unknown in the classical philosophies of Europe, though not without a grotesque phase of its own. 'In a pure place, established on a fixed seat, neither very much raised nor very low, made of a cloth, a black antelope

[1] Gītā, iv. 20; ii. 49. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 2, 3. [3] *Ibid.*, iv. 36; vi. 46.

skin and kusha grass; there, having made Manas (mind) one-pointed, with thought and the functions of the senses subdued, steady on his seat, he should practise Yoga for the purification of the self. Body, head, and neck balanced, immovably steady, looking fixedly at the point of the nose, with unwandering gaze, the self serene, fearless, firm in the vow of the Brahmachāri, Manas controlled, thinking on me, harmonized, let him sit concentrated on me.' [1]

The defects as well as the elements of truth in the methods of 'knowledge' and 'Yoga' will be further considered as we proceed with our examination of the general doctrines of the Vedānta; and we pass to a brief notice of the Gītā's special doctrine of *bhakti*, or personal devotion and faith, where we find ourselves in the region of distinctly Christian sentiment and truth. 'Among all Yogis, he who with the inner self abideth in me, who, full of faith, adoreth me, he is considered by me to be the most completely harmonized.' 'To the gods go the worshippers of the gods, but my devotees come unto me.' 'They verily who worship me with devotion, they are in me, and I also in them.' 'Know thou certainly that my devotee is never destroyed.' 'Thinking on me, thou shalt conquer all obstacles by my grace.' [2]

In these words, which certainly call to mind parallel expressions in the Gospels, we have indicated a high level of religious experience—trustful and ardent attachment to an object represented as Divine. And this sentiment has swayed the minds of India's millions in a way that no philosophy has ever done, clearly showing what the hearts of the people need. For the author of the Gītā took a leaf out of the book of Buddha, who proclaimed a salvation free to all, and his enthusiasm for humanity was the secret of his success. The author of the Gītā makes Krishna—though

[1] Gītā, vi 11–14. [2] *Ibid.*, vi. 47; vii. 23; ix. 29, 31; xviii. 58.

the very opposite of Buddha in moral character—the centre of his system, and the rallying-point for rival sects, and, by laying stress on the natural traits of devotion and love, also proclaims a salvation within the reach of even Sūdras and women—classes of small account in orthodox Brāhmanism.

All this, as we have seen, is quite opposed to strict Vedāntic teaching, where the unmanifested knows no manifestation, and where our sole business is to realize our identity with an impersonal and unqualified Brahma, not by devotion to any person, but solely by devotion to knowledge. In such a system there can be no God *outside ourselves*, and no such virtue as dependence on the grace of a personal Being, and it is difficult to see how two such diametrically opposite habits of thought can both reach the same end. It is true that Sankarāchārya, with the consistency of his system, disallows any substituting of *bhakti* for knowledge, only granting the mere method of devotion as a concession to lower minds, and as a preparatory stage to a higher level of piety; while it has to be further remembered that any personal or 'lower Brahman,' such as Isvara, is, in the Advaita school, only an illusion, to whom no whole-hearted devotion can possibly be given. In the Visishtādvaita, or qualified system of Rāmānuja, however, where there is no such distinction between a higher and a lower Brahman, and where personal and gracious qualities are predicated of the Supreme Deity, the *bhakti* doctrine holds a true place; but the one philosophy cannot help the other.

That the severely monistic doctrine fails to satisfy the heart is seen in the case of the most remarkable Indian ascetic and devotee of the last century, the late Rāmakrishna of Bengal, albeit the Vedānta forms the background of all his devotional meditation. These are some of his

words: 'God is the Absolute and Eternal Brahman, as well as the Father of the universe. The indivisible Brahman is like a vast shoreless ocean, without bounds and limits, in which I can only struggle and sink. But when I approach the always sportive (active) Deity (Hari), I get peace, like the sinking man who nears the shore.' In the depths of the impersonal we are like to perish; the personal is the haven of peace. This Indian saint was an ardent *bhakta;* and, indeed, the familiar language he sometimes uses of the Deity borders on the irreverent, as he himself seems to admit. 'A true devotee who has drunk deep of Divine Love is like a veritable drunkard, and, as such, cannot always observe the rules of propriety.' 'What is the strength of a devotee? He is a child of God, and tears are his greatest strength.' [1]

But here, again, there is no clear perception of what real religion is; the tears are to take the place of prayer. 'Devotional practices are necessary only so long as tears of ecstasy do not flow at hearing the name of Hari. He needs no devotional practices whose heart is moved to tears at the mere mention of the name of Hari.' [2]

If Divine love is such a lofty and inspiring quality, which will be freely admitted by the Christian, to whom 'God *is* love,' and if, according to Swāmi Vivekānanda, to the man who loves God, the bhakta, 'to him God exists entirely as love,' we may well ask: Must not this passionate love, of which the devotee is so conscious, and which, if love means anything, calls for some response from the Being who is loved, exist also in the Highest: and if not, does not the bhakti doctrine cast a reflection on the imperfect nature of the Supreme? so much so that Krishna or Hari cannot be

[1] Max Müller's 'Rāmakrishna.' 'Sayings,' 31, 104, 92. (Longmans, Green and Co.; London, 1898.)

[2] *Ibid.*, 357.

regarded as correct manifestations of the unmanifested, and the worshippers themselves, by possessing a virtue not possessed by their chief Deity, must be really greater than he. Swāmi Vivekānanda goes so far as to say that : 'When this highest ideal of love is reached, philosophy is thrown away';[1] but if the bhakta has reached a stage beyond which there is no need to proceed further, what becomes of the final *moksha* to which all souls should aspire, and to which the bhakti-yoga is only a way?

It is evident that both Vivekānanda and his master, Rāmakrishna, regard the emotional path as a convenient route for those who cannot undergo the strain of hard intellectual exercises; for, as the Gītā says: 'The difficulty of those whose minds are set on the unmanifested is greater; for the path of the unmanifested is hard for the embodied to reach.'[2] And yet it is doubtful if the bhakti-yoga is so much easier than the jnāna-yoga. It requires a rare emotional equipment, and also the very difficult power of controlling the passions; and as this power has to be *self*-created—for the disciple has to be 'balanced in pleasure and pain, self-reliant, to whom a lump of earth, a rock and gold are alike'[3]—since everything depends upon ourselves, many impassioned and phlegmatic souls have, after all, to fall back on the karma-yoga—the way of works. Moreover, it appears that philosophy is not to be 'thrown away' so lightly, for the notion of the Supreme Brahman has still to be kept in mind; otherwise 'the worshipper gets entirely misled.' Swāmi Vivekānanda tells us: 'If, as it may happen in some cases, the highly philosophical ideal, the Supreme Brahman, is himself dragged down by *Pratīka* worship to the level of the *Pratīka*, and the *Pratīka* itself is taken to be the Ātman of the worshipper or his Antar-

[3] *Brahmavādin*, vol. i., p. 253.
[2] Gītā, xii. 5. [3] *Ibid.*, xiv. 24.

yāmin, the worshipper gets entirely misled, as no *Pratīka* can really be the Ātman of the worshipper.'[1] So it comes to this, that the worship and devotion are, after all, unreal, and that the object loved is not the same as the object known: and if some right understanding of the Supreme is still possible, where is the necessity for the lower illusory worship?

This confusion and contradiction arises from separating two things that must ever be *united* in true religion—knowledge and love. They are two reciprocal powers of the religious life, standing in intimate connection, and ever acting and re-acting on each other. 'We love God because He first loved us' (1 John iv. 19): that is a fact of knowledge revealed to us in human history. We must have some knowledge of a person before we can love at all; and then further knowledge comes through devotion, and we must love, to know. And Christ, the revealer of God, is the revealer of Love; and the Object loved is the Object known.

The bhakti-yoga, beautiful and true as a form of piety, is in Hindūism defective and unreliable; since, on the one hand, the devotee must keep in impossible touch with the impersonal—the highest Brahman—in which case the lower exercise is superfluous; or, on the other hand, be attached to an incarnation, such as Krishna, when the doctrine of love is sure to be carried to excess, and the devotee is in danger of being worked up to a pitch of madness, until the whole thing assumes degrading forms, as in the corrupt literature of Purānic Vaishnavism, from which the moral sense recoils. In bhakti worship *everything depends on a worthy object*; and, however elevated may be the doctrines preached, as they are in the Gītā, the method itself only drags the devotee down to the lowest depths, if the central

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. i., p. 192.

attraction is at fault. In what striking contrast stands out the spiritual relation of Christ to His Church—His holy Bride. 'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself up for it' (Eph. v. 25); and in that sublime act of self-sacrifice is kindled all the pure and passionate devotion of His disciples. The bhakti of the Gītā has at least its parallel in the bhakti of the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages, who, in fervent longing and complete self-surrender, seemed to take possession of Christ for their very own, and whose souls, in calm detachment from the world, held personal intercourse with the Divine Lover and Sanctifier of men. Here the Hindū doctrine of bhakti, which feels after the very highest truth, and yet, in common with so many other parts of the great system of Hindūism, is so imperfectly comprehended, finds for the first time a worthy Object; while the hidden mystery of its incarnations and sacrifices and austerities is clearly revealed. The bhakti-yoga finds no legitimate place in the highest philosophy of India; but in the way in which it has captivated the heart of the people it bears witness to a vital truth, and declares that there must be a soil somewhere where it may safely grow, and a home where it may be fitly naturalized. That soil and home are found in the religion of Christ; and Hindūs will yet learn to transfer their allegiance from Krishna to Christ, and to find in Him a new creative centre on which mystic, sannyāsin, and bhakta may fix their profoundest thought and lavish their most ardent devotion.

The Bhagavad-gītā, then, while possessing a gentle charm and real beauty of its own, and being more Christian in sentiment than any other Indian literature; which can inculcate such virtues as 'fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness, self-restraint, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of calumny, compassion to living beings, uncovetousness, mildness,

modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, uprightness, amity, absence of pride,' [1] as Divine and human properties—while being all this, and therefore affording devotional help to Eastern minds, the poem contains nothing good that is not found in Christianity, and there realized in a perfect form, and centring in a sinless Personality and Pattern. Its claim to be a Divine revelation is destroyed at the outset by the immoral doctrine that justifies in a transcendental manner the taking of human life. 'Time am I,' says Srī Krishna, 'laying desolate the world, made manifest on earth to slay mankind! Not one of all these warriors ranged for strife escapeth death; thou shalt alone survive. Therefore stand up! win for thyself renown. Conquer thy foes, enjoy the spacious realm. By me they are already overcome; be thou the outward cause, left-handed one. Drona and Bhīshma and Jayadratha, Karna, and all the other warriors here, are slain by me. Destroy them fearlessly, fight! thou shalt crush thy rivals in the field.' [2] Such teaching, dangerous and inhuman, coupled with the stubborn fact that the Supreme Being is throughout the Krishna who figures elsewhere in Indian books as anything but Divine, deprive the Gītā of any claim to constitute a safe and sufficient guide—moral, political, or religious—for the coming generations of India.

[1] Gītā, xvi. 1–3. [2] *Ibid.*, xi. 32–34.

CHAPTER X

THE VEDANTA AND DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

Best Points of the Upanishads—Other-worldliness—Purity of Mind—The Self in All—Abides in the Heart—In touch with Christian Mysticism—Knowledge of the Divine, and Immortality—These Truths realized in the Bible—Examination of Vedānta Knowledge of the Absolute—Its Destructive and Agnostic Character—Revelation rejected—Thoughts instead of Things—Knowledge and Faith—Man's Chief Need—Christ's Knowledge of and Revelation of God—Through Life to Knowledge—Trustworthiness of Christ.

We have seen in our study of the Bhagavad-gītā that the chief requisite in the religious life of India, in the search for the Divine, is detachment from outward things, and purification of the senses and passions—the special equipment of the ascetic. And there are many beautiful utterances scattered throughout the Upanishads, relating to the vanity and fleeting character of all earthly things, which is the prevailing sentiment of the ancient Indian mind, leading it on to the conception of the one Eternal Reality. 'Those who imagine,' says the sage, 'that oblations and pious gifts are the highest object of man are fools; they do not know what is good; but those who with subdued senses, with knowledge, and the practices of the duties of a mendicant in the forest follow austerity and faith, go freed

from sin, to the abode of the immortal Spirit.'[1] 'I know that what is called a treasure is transient, for that Eternal is not obtained by things which are not eternal.'[2] 'The hereafter never rises before the eyes of the careless child, deluded by the delusion of wealth.'[3] 'When all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal.'[4]

This 'other-worldliness' — India's truest and most beautiful trait, which should never be lost—is distinctly Christian; for we are told 'not to lay up treasures upon the earth, but in heaven' (Matt. vi. 19, 20); to 'love not the world, neither the things that are in the world' (1 John ii. 15); to 'look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen' (2 Cor. iv. 18). Numerous, too, are the passages in the Upanishads that dwell on purity and tranquillity as essentials for seeing the Supreme. 'A man who is free from desires and free from grief sees the majesty of the Self by the grace of the Creator.[5] 'He who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self by knowledge.'[6] 'When a man's nature has become purified by the serene light of knowledge, then He sees him.'[7] The many precepts of the Bible bearing upon the spiritual condition required for a vision of God may be summed up in the words of Christ: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matt. v. 8); while the qualities of passion and darkness (*rajas* and *tamas*) that cling to the 'elemental self' of the Upanishads are very similar to those of the 'natural man' of the Apostle Paul (Gal. v. 19–21).

But these old books reach their highest level of spiritual

[1] Mundaka Upanishad, I. ii. 10, 11.
[2] Katha.-Upan., ii. 11. [3] *Ibid.*, ii. 6. [4] *Ibid.*, vi. 15.
[5] *Ibid.*, ii. 20. [6] *Ibid.*, ii. 24. [7] Mund.-Upan., III. i. 8.

thought in the expression they give to the sense of the Infinite—the Self within all things. 'What is that, knowing which, all is known?' 'If in this world a person knows the Self, then the true end of all human aspirations is gained; if a person does not know the Self, there will be a great calamity. The wise who discern in all beings the Brahman become immortal after departing from the world.'[1] 'He, the highest Person, who is awake in us while we are asleep, shaping one lovely sight after another, that indeed is the Bright, that is Brahman, that alone is called the Immortal.[2] 'The Infinite is bliss. There is no bliss in anything finite.'[3] 'Lord of the universe, glory to thee. Thou art the Self of all, thou art the Maker of all, the enjoyer of all; thou art all life, and the lord of all pleasure and joy. Glory to thee, the tranquil, the immeasurable, without beginning and without end.'[4] 'His form cannot be seen; no one perceives him with the eye.[5]

It is the distinctive teaching of the Upanishads that the Supreme—the Brahman—*abides in the heart*, and is to be found in the heart; and this, perhaps, constitutes the most important contribution which these ancient writings make to religious thought: the immanence of Deity in the soul of man, and the Divine nature of the Soul itself; that God's witness is within—in the spiritual part of us; that man's heart is the dwelling-place he seeks. 'More subtle than an atom, greater than the greatest of existences, It makes its dwelling in the cavity of the heart of every man.' 'He who understands all and knows all, he to whom all this glory in the world belongs, the Self, is placed in the ether, in the heavenly city of Brahman, the heart.'[6] It is true that a materialistic aspect seems often given to this

[1] Talav.-Upan., ii. 5.
[2] Katha.-Upan., v. 8.
[3] Chhand-Upan., VII. xxiii.
[4] Mait.-Brah.-Upan., v. 1.
[5] Svet.-Upan., iv. 20.
[6] Mund.-Upan., II ii. 7.

thought, and the attempt is made to locate the Deity, as well as to establish his presence by the evidence of the senses.[1] 'He moves about, becoming manifold within the heart, where the arteries meet, like spokes fastened to the nave.'[2] But again: 'He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the Self within all beings, watching over all works, the witness, the perceiver, the only One, free from qualities.'[3] 'Now that light which shines above this heaven, in the highest worlds, beyond which there are no other worlds, that is the same light which is within man'[4]—calling to mind the words of the Apostle John: 'That was the true light, which lighteth every man coming into the world' (John i. 9).

For this Divine indwelling is one of the most precious truths taught in the Bible also—the presence and power of the Living God in the soul—though realized in an altogether different way, and free from any extreme pantheistic conception. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, *with him* also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones' (Isa. lvii. 15)—of which contrition, however, we hear little in the Upanishads. It is the absorbing thought of the Christian mystic, who delights to think of God as dwelling in the heart, in the inmost recesses of the soul, as one of them pleads:

> '*Within! within!* oh turn
> Thy spirit's eyes, and learn
> Thy wandering senses gently to control;
> Thy dearest Friend *dwells deep within thy soul*,
> And asks thyself of thee,
> That heart, and mind, and sense, He may make whole
> In perfect harmony.'

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[1] Chhand.-Upan., III. xiii. 7, 8.
[2] Mund.-Upan., II. ii. 6.
[3] Svet.-Upan., vi. 11.
[4] Chhand.-Upan., III. xiii. 7.

Turning to the New Testament, we find these truths, which the ancient sages were feeling after in so remarkable a manner, shining luminously in the full light of a noonday sun. If we want further light on the Upanishads, if we want to see their best and highest truths amplified, illuminated, realized, we must study the Bible. A devout mind that delights in the most spiritual parts of the Upanishads cannot but appreciate the Bible. Here this great truth is expressed in a different language. It is Christ, as the Divine Revealer, or the Divine Spirit, as the Regenerator, who dwells in the heart; and stress is laid upon the fact that the heart, sinful and impure by nature, is renewed and *made fit* for the abode of the Holy One, an idea, again, foreign to the Upanishads. 'The Spirit of truth,' says Christ, 'whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him; for He abideth with you, and shall be *in you*' (John xiv. 17). 'Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwelleth in you;* (Rom. viii. 9). 'He that keepeth God's commandments *abideth in Him*, and *He in him*' (1 John iii. 24). 'God is love; and he that abideth in love *abideth in God*, and God *abideth in him*' (1 John iv. 12): where we observe the condition of the abiding—'keeping God's commandments'—and the high place that love occupies in the Christian life.

Another characteristic thought of the Upanishads is the *knowledge* possible to the soul of the great Self, and that such knowledge *leads to immortality*. Indeed, in spite of all their errors and trivialities, the burden of these old books is their ceaseless search after the Infinite; the eagerness of the soul to *know;* and that it is only the *spiritual* man who can know Divine realities. 'That God, the Maker of all things, the great Self, always dwelling in the heart of man, is perceived by the heart, the soul, the mind

they who know it become immortal.'[1] 'The wise who have thought on all things, and recognised the Self in them, become immortal when they have departed from this world.'[2] And Indra is represented as saying: 'He who meditates on me as life and immortality gains his full life in this world, and obtains in the *svarga* (heavenly) world immortality and indestructibility.[3] In these beautiful words, though they give us no revelation of what God is, there is a distinctly Christian truth affirmed: that the knowledge of God is the one essential thing, and that a true knowledge gains immortality. And if we substitute Christ for Indra, the words might be His, for He says: 'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ' (John xvii. 3). 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son (or Word) which is in the bosom of the Father, *He hath declared Him*' (John i. 18). And so the Christian Apostle can say: 'And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is *in His Son*' (1 John v. 11). And Christ Himself can say, in majestic words that no mere human lips could ever utter: '*I am the resurrection and the life:* he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me *shall never die*' (John xi. 25, 26).

Christ has 'brought life and immortality *to light*' (2 Tim. i. 1) through His revelation of God, and through His own resurrection from the dead, in which He carried our nature over death in victory. There we have real, objective knowledge. The Divine life is in the Divine Son, and He reveals it and imparts it to all who are united to Him by faith and love. The immortality which before was a Divine instinct and intuition in the soul, and

[1] Svet.-Upan., iv. 17. [2] Tala.-Upan., ii. 5.
[3] Kaush.-Upan., ii. 2.

developed at one time into a philosophic speculation, and at another time into a saintly hope—and nowhere more strikingly than in ancient India—has become in Christ a glorious reality. In all Christ said, He spoke not with the faltering words of the philosopher, but with the calm authority of one who *had in Himself* the life of which He spoke. What He brought to light was not a mere dogma of the soul's immortality, but the assurance of full, perfect, and eternal life; not a mere existence in the future, but the perfection of being for man, begun here and consummated hereafter; for the God whom Christ reveals is a *Living* Person, entering into relations of grace with living men, and in whom, therefore, their personal continuance and eternal perfection are secured.

According to the Upanishads and the Vedānta, then, God *can be known*, though not, as we shall now see, in the sense understood by them. For what is it 'to know'? It is to perceive, or cognize, that which is true or actual, and is always constructive or interpretative of the real world. Knowledge is judgment, in that it affirms something to be real—an act in which we are obliged to *think;* and such affirmations are necessary and universal, and consistent with the judgments of other people. Knowledge—and the same knowledge—is possible to all, because the world outside us is itself a revelation of reason and spirit, with which our reason and spiritual being are in essence one. And on the direct knowledge afforded by our mental and spiritual consciousness, we build up our knowledge and belief respecting the Divine Being and the spiritual world. But this is not the sober line of the Upanishads, or of the most recent expounders of the Vedānta; they take a bolder step than that. Their speculations are not regulated by either reason or revelation, but depend solely on subjective theories of their

own; and by the understanding of certain Vedic texts, and then going beyond them to a point that transcends the limits of thought and reason, they profess to know or realize exhaustively the highest Brahman, the Absolute Himself—with the one pantheistic aim of identifying subject and object, man and God.[1]

This, indeed, is one of the strong and startling positions of the Vedānta, maintained at any rate, by Sankarāchārya, but one that cannot be rationally held. For no doctrine of philosophy is more universally accepted than the relativity of human knowledge, as taught especially—in Britain—by Hamilton and Spencer: that we cannot possibly know anything of any kind of 'Substance,' whether mental or material, except as the ground of attributes. The 'underlying substance' of the Schools—the 'thing in itself' of Kant—is a mere name, and cannot be known by itself; it is in the sphere of being, not in the sphere of thought. And this is true of the impersonal Essence, the Vedānta Brahma. Ultimate religious ideas, like ultimate scientific ideas, turn out to be 'merely symbols of the actual, not cognitions of it.'[2] Science teaches that no object can be *known* that cannot be classified; and since the First Cause, the Absolute, belongs to no class or order as such, He cannot be comprehended in His essential nature—though He may be known relatively *to us*, and may, therefore, be worshipped and communed with. We are unable to conceive such things as infinite space, or an infinite line, or infinite curves, such as the parabola and hyperbola; yet we may know something concerning these infinite things. We may not know our nearest friend in his totality; still, we know him by his manifested relations to us and by his

[1] See 'Vedānta Sūtras,' S. B. of E. Series, vol. xxxiv., introd., p. 27.

[2] Spencer's 'First Principles,' p. 68.

revealed character. Human knowledge cannot compass the Infinite, though it can conceive the Perfect.

But the relative nature of this knowledge is exactly what the Vedāntist denies, while he yet affirms its absolute nature. Nothing can be predicated of the Impersonal One, except *Neti neti*—'not this, not this.' Scripture, even, can afford us no knowledge; and since *ātman* cannot be treated as object, all further inquiry of the cause of knowledge, as Dr. Deussen says, is futile. Nevertheless, the out-and-out Vedāntist, like the Hegelian, though not on parallel lines, claims as attainable philosophy a complete knowledge or realization of the Infinite. This, if really attained, would convert philosophy or religion into absolute science. But how is it said to be attained? The *ādvaitin* teaches the existence of God, or the Higher Brahman, but adds as an explanation, which is a mere assumption, that He is possessed of no qualities (*nirguna*),[1] no form (*nirākāra*), no difference (*nirvisesha*), no limitations (*nirupādhika*); is, indeed, pure Being or Thought itself; and is to be known, therefore, only by a withdrawal of the senses from every external object, of the mental faculties from their truest cognitions, and by complete suppression of the passions.

But this is not *knowledge* in the ordinary sense of the term; and its peculiar nature, and the methods by which it is gained, cannot be brought under scientific or philosophic treatment at all. Since it transcends the ordinary modes of cognition, which are regarded as inapplicable to the Highest Being, there are no rational tests by which it can be judged. Vedāntists hold that the soul, being unconscious, does not cognize anything, for if it did, volition, activity, and consequently happiness and misery, would follow: hence cognition is ascribed to the *antahkarana*,

[1] 'Vedānta Sūtras, introd., p. 25.

the 'internal organ,' which consists of mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), egoism (*ahamkāra*), and thinking (*chitta*), and yet is unintelligent, a portion of the phenomenal, and therefore illusory. Swāmi Vivekānanda, who we must always remember was the latest exponent of Vedāntism, tells us that all questions relating to the existence of God are 'beyond the field of human reason'; but 'man has in himself the faculty of transcending his intellect';[1] and in these seasons of '*superconscious* experience'—the experience *par excellence* of the rishis—the mind is brought, by some ecstatic vision, of which we can form no idea, face to face with spiritual truths and facts which could never have been reasoned out. There is, thus, no correspondence of thought and truth, no connection between human knowledge as such—though the term 'mind' is still used—and the Supreme. We can affirm nothing about Him, for He comes into no possible relation to us; and He is to be realized in this exalted way only when the entire mental and moral constitution—*i.e.*, the whole man —which turns out, according to the doctrine of Māyā, to be a delusion and a snare, has been dissolved. And we have only to recall the doctrine of Māyā—the mainstay of the Vedānta—though itself darkness, to get some light upon the whole subject. For through a belief in Māyā, the whole of human knowledge is necessarily discredited, it being simply the generalizations of Illusion, and therefore unrelated to the real and the true. The human mind itself can form no conception of Brahma, the Existent, because the universal forms of thought—time, space, causation—together with Self, are Māyā, or unreal; and it is not till we get behind these, by destroying them, that the vision dawns upon us. And yet, as has been pointed out before, by a strange theoretical inconsistency though a practical necessity, sense

[1] Raja Yoga, i. 49.

symbols are continually being used to illustrate that which is above the sensible, and even conscious plane, and to establish abstract principles: the waves and the sea, the clay and the pot, the million images of the sun in the rain-drops, being specially employed to illustrate the Vedāntic conception of the universe—the One in the many.

Into the refined air of this lofty region, where the common forms of time, space, and causality are superseded, ordinary minds may be excused if they cannot rise; and they must be content to remain ignorant of the discoveries themselves, since no reliable information has ever been vouchsafed of the results of these sublimated states of the soul. And seeing we are told that, until we have become rishis and realized these exalted experiences, 'religious life has not begun for us,'[1] the prospects of ultimate freedom, or *mukti*, for the vast majority of mortals, must be very poor. We must all be philosophers or nothing! But though Vedāntism, like Hegelianism, is a philosophy which *professes* to be the absolute and final explanation of the universe, the loss is not so severe when we remember that it can become such an explanation only after it has left out of account that which is the centre and crown of the universe around us—the Mind of man. By thus discrediting human reason, which is a Divine faculty, and therefore a veritable organon in the discovery of truth, Vedāntism, instead of representing faith, ultimately represents scepticism, and becomes allied with the extremest form of agnosticism. It has been well remarked by a keen critic of the Vedānta, that 'man can never know what it is to be God until,' according to this philosophy, 'he has *ceased to be man*.'[2] But since it is only as we are

[1] Vivekānanda's 'Calcutta to Almora,' p. 169.

[2] Thompson's 'Teaching of Swāmi Vivekānanda,' p. 13.

conscious, that we know that we ourselves exist, the moment we get out of the conscious into any '*super*-conscious state,' we can have no knowledge even of our own existence, much less of that of any other. The world with all that is in it, 'becomes' precisely as we become; and there is for us no possible God except the One our consciousness can hold. God is involved in the structure of man's being; for the feeling of God within us is the evidence of the corresponding Reality. 'God,' says Plato, 'holds the soul attached to Him by its root; and it is not till we get down to this root of the soul, the "I," which is more fundamental than all its faculties or functions, that we feel the need of that communion with Him which is in reality an evidence that He is already in communion with us.' [1]

Had the ancient rishis possessed this sense of communion with a Living God, instead of being lost in abstract contemplation, they would have had no need to soar into superconscious regions in order to attain, as they imagined, demonstrative knowledge or a perfect vision of the Absolute. And in taking this course, the Vedānta virtually implies *the rejection of the authority of revelation*, which does not impart complete or absolute knowledge, but appeals, primarily, to faith. The Vedānta professes to be based on the Veda; but though the orthodox doctrines of the Vedas may be still set forth in the Upanishads, these are rather as deductions from an intellectual abstraction than as revealed truths. A revelation worth the name must supply theology not only with a few categories, but with realities external to the mind itself, which may regulate and correct the inferences of pure reason, with a life above its own, which may save the mind from endlessly revolving on

[1] Illingworth's 'Personality, Human and Divine,' p. 134.

itself. This was precisely the position of the minds we meet with in the Upanishads; they were endlessly revolving on themselves; and so they identified the method of thought with the method of knowledge, and put thoughts for things. Unacquainted with any language save their own, their conclusions about words seemed to them as real as conclusions about things. If a theology professes to be based on a revelation, it cannot construct a system in which the methods of thought are put on the same level with revealed truth or objective knowledge. The revelation must determine not only specific truths, but also the method of their exposition. It is altogether inconsistent to try to combine a regard for the authority of revelation with the advocacy of speculation, in which the intellect follows no guidance beyond its own. But, after all, it is part of the teaching of Vedāntism that, 'as soon as the knowledge of the truth is obtained, the sacred writings themselves, as a portion of the *unreal dualism*, are to be abandoned, just as a torch is extinguished when one has no further need of it, or as the husk is thrown away by one who merely wants the grain.' [1] And Swāmi Vivekānanda reminds us that the Vedas themselves encourage their readers to go beyond them. 'The Vedas say that they were given out for the child-mind, and when you have grown you must go beyond them.' [2]

Intermediate between the agnostic—the man who does not know—and the gnostic, who offers a key to the knowledge of the Infinite, there have been those in all times who, taking into account the *whole* spiritual nature of man—rational, volitional, and moral—and with faith

[1] 'Panchadasī,' iv. 43-46. Quoted by Jacob in 'Hindu Pantheism,' p. 25.

[2] *Brahmavādin*, vol. ii. 36.

or trust in the absolute reasonableness of the universe, have not faith in the possibility of either ordinary or philosophic men being able to reach the transcendental or Divine thought, in which this reasonableness consists. 'Man,' says Goethe, 'is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out where the problem begins'; and the true solution is more likely to come to those who seek to *do* right, rather than to those who desire to *know* all. Relief from insolvable problems comes as the result of a surrender to the faith or trust of mankind—a faith not made by philosophy, but without which philosophy cannot be filled in. A philosophy grounded on such faith was the highest lesson of what is known as the Scottish school—Hamilton and Reid—and, more covertly, of Kant in Germany, in his 'Practical Reason.' It does not offer an intellectual system of the actual universe—a comprehension of it in the Infinite; it offers faith or trust as the basis and constitution of all philosophic knowledge. All practical knowledge rests ultimately on some instinctive belief. It is because we believe in the trustworthiness of our five senses that we have our knowledge of the external world. It is because we believe in personal identity that we hold our fellow-man responsible for his actions, and punish him for his wrong-doing. On these instinctive, primary beliefs, the whole fabric of human life is built; and religious belief—belief in God—is one of these spontaneous growths of human nature. The ideal state of wisdom is not to be attained by man in or through pure thought, but in the irresistible impulse to believe, from which a human being, in a normal, healthy state, cannot escape. In this present world of education and discipline we 'walk by faith, not by sight'; and yet such faith, though it does not yield demonstrative knowledge, is real knowledge and certainty of the

highest kind, for it is soul-seeing—the insight of the spirit within into the Divine heart of things without us. As Professor Seth has said of the Hegelian philosophy, let us be 'shy of demonstration which proves too much; we are men, and not gods; the ultimate synthesis is not ours.' Faith is rather the element for time, complete knowledge and perfect vision the element for eternity.

We have thus seen that God cannot be known or realized in His infinitude, or as the underlying Substance of the universe—the thing itself. And turning to the Christian Scriptures, we find that they also are agnostic here! 'Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?' asks the Book of Job (xi. 7, 8). 'Behold, God is great, and we know Him not' (xxxvi. 26). 'Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out' (xxxvii. 23). His *greatness* surpasses our highest knowledge. The marvels of wisdom and power by which man is surrounded are but transient and partial manifestations of God's eternal might; and when we have reached the farthest limit of our present knowledge, the horizon perpetually recedes. God is still beyond us. The knowledge of God is accessible to us; but His greatness *transcends* all that we can know of Him. To know of God only that He is the Absolute is but cold comfort to our poor humanity. And it is a blessed thought that in those respects in which we have no *power* to know God—His immensity, infinity, eternity, the words most used in the Upanishads—we have no *need* to know Him; whereas, just in those respects in which a knowledge of Him is of no value to us—His grace and mercy, His pity and His love; how he feels towards us; whether He cares in the least for our little lives in the midst of the vast forces of Nature; what He is prepared to do for us; how He regards our sin; whether He will

forgive, and help us to realize our destiny as spiritual beings, and to stand at last on the heights of life—in these respects, which go to form His *character*, and of which we hear little in the Upanishads, we have in the Gospel abundant means of acquiring that knowledge. And that is the one thing we most need to know. The secret things are not ours; the revealed things are. 'O righteous Father,' says Christ, 'the world knew Thee not, but *I knew Thee*' (John xvii. 25). The Bible is the only book which tells us that 'the world *through its wisdom knew not God*' (1 Cor. i. 21).

And what did Christ know? What has *He* told us? He drew the veil aside that had concealed the inscrutable Mystery, and revealed what the Vedāntist never guessed—a FATHER. How could he guess it? Who could tell man that secret? Only God Himself. Equally with the certainty that *man* knows God he needs the certainty that *God* knows him. The Upanishads represent man seeking God, trying to know Him and lay hold of Him. They do not ask the question, What has He revealed? But the Bible is full of the conviction that God seeks man, lays hold of man, reveals Himself to man; and the hope of the world lies, not in the ability of man to know God, but in the activity of God in man's behalf; and that activity we have in the Christian Gospel. The Upanishads are psychological excursions *about* God; the Bible has a message from God for the spirits in search of Him. It is that which constitutes a Divine revelation. In it God speaks to man. A dumb God is no God; a God who does not manifest Himself to the men made in His image cannot be God; and self-communication is of the essence of personality. Not to know God so much as first to be *known of God* is man's great need. As George MacDonald says:

> 'Not on the clasp of consciousness; on Thee my life depends:
> Not what *I think*, but what *Thou art*, makes sure.'

And through Christ, who is God Revealed, man arrives at his highest knowledge of God. For in Him God speaks to us. Throughout the Bible He speaks to man. The ancient Hebrews were as sure of God as of the Eternal hills. He is God, and their God. No book shows such a grip of the living God as the Psalms. No men so stand as in His very presence as the prophets. But in Christ He comes nearer. In Christ, the Incarnate Logos—the Word—God speaks clearly and authoritatively to men. Christ is the Divine utterance—God's self-revelation to His creatures. The Upanishads seem to have had some conception of this thought, for one of them says: 'Two Brahmas have to be meditated on: the word and the non-word. By the word alone is the non-word revealed.' [1]

In Christ, then, we can be *sure of God*—of His real Being. We are not left to derive our idea of Him from the dreams of a disordered fancy or from 'an infinitely extended photograph of ourselves, begotten of an insatiable vanity'; but we know Him, feel Him as our Father. God's way of shining on this earth of ours has been, above all, *through life*, through history. 'The life,' manifested in Christ, was 'the light of men' (John i. 4). *Through life to knowledge* is the Christian way. The staple of human nature is in its sensitive life; and life is known by living. And in all Christ *was* and did He showed us God. Who and what is God? God is like Christ. If we conceive of God as an 'infinite Christ,' we can have no worthier conception, no Diviner knowledge. Whatever coming ages may yet learn from the speculations of philosophers or the discoveries of science, this truth will remain changeless and eternal—God *is*, and God is *Father*. That is the last, the holiest, the sweetest word that can be spoken of God. We

[1] Mait.-Upan., vi. 22.

need no other. It is the summit idea of God. Christ has fixed for evermore the world's conception of Deity.

And it is the best *working* conception of God that the world can have—the conception that best meets its sorrows and its sins, its difficulties and duties, its aspirations and its hopes. With such a God, *prayer*, which is instinctive in the human heart, finds its highest place; whereas in the Vedānta there is no place for prayer. The *Advaita* conception of the Supreme is an infinite abstraction, possible only to philosophic thought—a subject for meditation, not an object for communion. Let the energy of these two truths once enter into a man's heart—that in everything we have to do with a *living* God, and that our God is the *Christ*-like One—and they are enough to revolutionize a man's entire life.

But it may be asked, How can we tell that Christ's view was the true one? We have seen that the most direct knowledge of spiritual realities is afforded by our own consciousness, and can we refuse the witness of the consciousness of the most perfect character the world has seen—the consciousness of Christ? Who would dare to say that He was under an illusion? When 'the clearest eyes that ever looked on this world and into the heavens, and the keenest judgment that ever weighed human life, and the purest heart that ever throbbed with human sympathy,' declares, 'I *know* the Father,' I repose on His declaration with perfect trust. The pure in heart see God; and He, the purest, had the clearest vision of a Divine Father, with whom He was in habitual communion. Can we refuse such evidence, or the evidence of Christ's first disciples, who, when He had lived His life and uttered His words, knew that the Divine Life had been incarnated before them; knew, for the first time in the history of the world, what was meant by the will and holiness and love of God?

It is 'not reason that isolates itself from the wisest and best, and says, I will solve my problems alone. It is reason to see with the wise and to feel with the good.' God is known only to the spirit—that is the last and most true word of the Upanishads; and He is known best, known completely, by the best and keenest spirit of the race. The poet Browning is as faultlessly true as he is clear when he says:

> 'I say, the acknowledgment of *God in Christ*,
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise.'

CHAPTER XI

IDENTITY AND ABSORPTION

Doctrine of Identity and Absorption—Higher and Lower Brahma—Passages quoted, Ancient and Modern—True Monism—Fallacy in '*That art Thou*'—A Pantheism founded on Revelation—The Two mutually exclusive—Conventional Opinions and Necessary Beliefs—Moral and Theological Aspects of Advaita System—A Distorted Truth—An Ancient Conceit—Subjective Religion and True Theology—Moral Evil not reckoned with—Conscience and Christian Sense of Sin—Pessimism and Buddhism—Mukti and Nirvāna—Assumption of Transmigration, and Destruction of Psychic Body—The Higher Christian Consciousness.

WE pass now to the crowning assumption of the Vedānta—the fundamental and final *identity of the individual soul* (*jivātma with the highest Brahma* (*paramātma*)—the doctrine on which the whole system of Sankarāchārya hinges.

Not only does the enlightened soul know Brahma in his essential Being, but he comes to know that he himself *is* Brahma. By rightly understanding such oracular utterances of the Veda as, 'It is Brahma'; 'I am Brahma';[1] 'This soul is Brahma';[2] 'That art Thou,'[3] (*tat tvam asi*)—the greatest of all the texts of the Upanishads, the supreme announcement—which are supposed to teach that there

[1] Brihad.-Upan. I., iv. 10. [2] *Ibid.* II., v. 19.
[3] Chhandogya-Upan., vi. 4.

is no essential difference between the man's true Self and the highest Self—the purified intelligence rises to a condition of spiritual intuition (*samyogdarsana*), or ecstatic vision, in which the highest knowledge possible is reached. Man obtains at the moment of death his final release from further transmigration, and asserts himself in his own true nature, which is nothing else but the absolute Brahma[1]—the Brahma, *i.e.*, as understood by Sankarāchārya—the *nirguna* Brahma.

For this teacher distinguishes, as we have seen, between the *nirguna* Brahma—the impersonal One, transcending all attributes—and the *saguna* Brahma—the One with qualities, or a personal God. He makes room in his system for a higher and a lower Brahma, though the lower, owing to the working of Māyā, is illusory and fictitious. And so, while a knowledge of the lower Brahma—the only knowledge within the reach of the vast majority of men—enables the soul to proceed on the road to the fathers or the gods, to a perishable reward in a transient heaven, only he who truly knows the highest Brahma, and can say, 'I am Brahma' (*Brahmāsmi*), becomes one with Him in final deliverance (*mukti*). Says the Bhagavad-gītā: 'The knowers of the three (Vedas), the Soma-drinkers, the purified from sin, the sacrificers, pray of the way to Svarga; they reach the holy world of the god Indra, and eat in heaven the divine feasts of the gods. They, having enjoyed the spacious Svarga-world, their holiness *withered*, came back to this mortal world. Following the virtues enjoined by the three, desiring virtues, they obtain the transitory.'[2] This is the distinctive teaching of the Vedānta, and it forms an instructive passage. It teaches that the knowledge of the Vedas is a very inferior science'; that purification from sin and the practice of virtues merits only

[1] Vedānta-Sūtras, introd., p. xxvii. [2] Bhagavad-gītā, ix. 20, 21.

a transitory reward; that this reward is enjoyed in a festive, sensuous paradise; that the heavenly climate having had the effect of sapping and withering the little holiness they had, the worn-out possessors come back to this mortal, sinful world, to begin the round again; though it is doubtful whether even this transitory stay in 'the spacious Svarga-world' would not offer stronger attractions to the lovers of life than a total loss of conscious existence in the ocean of Brahma. In Rāmānuja's system, it will be remembered, there is no such distinction as a lower and a higher Brahma; his Deity is essentially personal, the Ruler of a real though dependent world, animated by His Spirit.

The following are a few of the numerous passages that affirm this identity, undoubtedly taught in the Upanishads. Says the sage to the King: 'The heart, indeed, O King, *is* the highest Brahma.'[1] 'The man who, freed from desires . . . desires the Self only . . . *being* Brahma, he goes to Brahma.'[2] 'For when there is, *as it were*, duality, then one sees the other, smells the other, tastes the other, salutes the other, etc.; but when the Self only is all this, how should he see another, smell another, salute another, touch another,' and so on?[3] 'The wise having reached Him who is omnipresent, devoted to the Self, enter into Him wholly.'[4] 'If a man knows himself, that he *is this universal Spirit*, what can he want, what can he crave, that he should pine after the body?' 'Whoever has found and understood the Self . . . he indeed *is the Creator*, for he is the maker of everything, his is the world, for *he is the world itself*.'[5] That is to say, the whole universe is God: there is no division, no separation; for He is Infinite; and it is this false idea of a division between God and man that is the

[1] Brihad.-Upan. IV., ii. 7. [2] *Ibid.* IV., iv. 6.
[3] *Ibid.* IV., vi. 15. [4] Mund.-Upan. III., ii. .
[5] Brihad.-Upan., iv. 4, 12, 13.

source of all unhappiness. There are no 'two' in anything, no 'I' and 'thou,' no 'mine' or 'thine': there is but One—the 'Secondless Reality.' The friend is not loved as being 'mine,' but only as a manifestation of the Self, the one Spirit in which all the little selves lose their individuality. The Indian saint and *Sannyāsin*, Rāmakrishna, already quoted, enunciates this truth in plain, if homely, language:

> 'Know thyself, and thou shalt then know the non-self and the Lord of all. What is my ego? Is it my hand, or foot, or flesh, or blood, or muscle, or tendon? Ponder deep, and thou shalt know that there is no such thing as I. As by continually peeling off the skin of the onion, so by analyzing the ego, it will be found that there is not any real entity corresponding to the ego. The ultimate result of all such analysis is God. When egoism drops away, Divinity manifests itself.' [1]

It is true that along with man's self there has always been that other Self, of which the Upanishads often beautifully and correctly speak, and that we can no more get away from It than from our own shadow; that, if we are 'to find God,' we must do as Plato said, 'look within'; that there is a mystical and a moral sense in which we are to 'lose ourselves' in the Divine; that until 'egoism' dies there can be no true salvation for us; but this is altogether different from the assertion that 'he who knows that highest Brahma *becomes* even Brahma': [2] just as on the removal of a mirror the face reflected in it lapses into the face itself.

Dr. J. Muir has given the following metrical version of a passage in one of the Upanishads which well expresses the doctrine taught. It was delivered by an ancient Indian lord to his wife:

> 'Whate'er we round us see, the whole
> Terrestrial system—gods, priests, kings—

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[1] Max Müller's 'Rāmakrishna,' pp. 179, 180.

[2] Brihad.-Upan. IV., iv. 9, and Mundaka-Upan. III., ii. 9.

The vast totality of things—
Is nothing else than that one Soul.
A lump of salt, as soon as cast
Into its primal source, the sea,
Dissolves, and ne'er can cease to be
A part of that salt ocean vast.
So, sprung from that great Spirit, men,
When once their earthly term is spent,
To him return, and with him blent,
The sense of life no more retain.'[1]

Modern expositors of the Vedānta leave no doubt as to the correct interpretation of such passages. Swāmi Vivekānanda says: 'It comes to nothing short of this, that the Impersonal Being, our highest generalization, is in ourselves, and we are in it. "O Svetaketu [quoting from the Chhandogya Upanishad], thou art that; thou art that Impersonal Being; that God whom thou hast been searching for over the universe is *all the time yourself*"—yourself, not in the personal sense, but in the impersonal.'[2] Dr. Deussen reasons in the following manner: '(1) The soul cannot be different from Brahman, because besides Brahman there is no being; (2) it cannot be regarded as a transformation of Brahman, because Brahman is unchangeable; (3) and still less is it a part of Brahman, because Brahman has no parts. Nothing remains, then, but to conclude that the soul is identical with Brahman—that *each one of us is the all-unchangeable Brahman*, without parts and comprehending in itself all being.'[3] And, once more: 'The crowning glory or the Vedānta is that it teaches the divinity of man, his essential oneness with God, and his power to realize his true nature. It lifts him from a "worm of the dust"—a mere helpless puppet in the hands of some supernatural

[1] Brihad.-Upan. II., iv. 1; IV., v. 1, in Muir's 'Metrical Translations,' p. 53.

[2] *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii. 153.

[3] 'Short Account,' etc., p. 14.

power—and tells him he is eternally pure and perfect in his real Self; that he is free and immortal, that he need not suffer, need not despair, but can purify himself, can shake off the bonds of ignorance, which alone enslave him, and realize the words of Jesus when He said: "I and My Father are one."'[1]

We will not comment on this attempt to justify Vedāntic teaching from the Gospels—a favourite resort in the present day—but would observe that Indian dualists, in common with theists generally, of course, reject this subtle and stupendous doctrine, in its extreme and unqualified statement; and severe and continuous have been the controversies between the two schools of thought in India, and irreconcilable the strife. Truth generally lies, however, between two extremes. Absolute unity is the basal rock on which Vedāntic teaching stands, and monism, or a unitary system of thought, is undoubtedly the universal ideal of philosophy, and means, primarily, consistency. Two contradictory ideas cannot at the same time be accepted as true. There is a oneness about truth which admits of no doubt. A thinker cannot help searching for unity of thought, and science itself is simply the endeavour to unify knowledge. That being so, Christians are, presumably, monists, and hold the world to be a unity, and would deduce all the varied phenomena of the physical and psychical worlds, ultimately, from a single principle; for, according to the Bible, 'In the beginning GOD'—who alone existed—'created the heaven and the earth'—all that is. But such a position does not deny the real existence of the world and the real existence of ourselves, as related to one great whole. It rather involves what in Berkeley's system are the three connected objects of all ultimate and metaphysical inquiry and speculation—Self,

[1] *Brahmavādin*, vol. iii. 193.

the world, and God; the two opposed and dependent substances, and the one Supreme Substance and Power of all.

This view, however, which approaches that of the Visishtādvaita school, is quite different from the Advaita, or auto-monistic, which identifies subject and object, thinking and being, thought and thing. The fundamental fallacy of the Vedānta, as interpreted by Sankarāchārya, lies in the denial of the 'primitive dualism of consciousness,' the antithesis of subject and object, from which all the explanations of philosophy must take their start, since the relation between these two is the primary basis of the laws of thought, as well as the form which every thought must take. In every act of thought there is this unity in difference, and the absolute unity or identity of Vedāntism is, therefore, unthinkable. As already seen, as long as we are in a body which has a mind, and that mind is exercised, the Absolute, or Brahma—according to Vedāntism—cannot possibly be known. If such knowledge is possible, dualism, or the relation between subject and object, is at once established. A state in which the knowing and the known are one, in which subject and object are identified, implies, as Hamilton, Mansel, and Spencer have alike shown, the annihilation of both; and hence our very personality, the existence of which is to each person a fact beyond all others the most certain, is yet a thing which cannot truly be known at all, for the object perceived is itself the perceiving subject.

The supreme announcement of the Vedānta—*Tat tvam asi*, 'That art Thou'—besides being what is called in logic a *petitio principii*, cannot even be made without falsifying the philosophy itself, for the assertion is in the form of a logical expression, which declares a difference at the very moment the identity is affirmed. The terms 'That' and

'Thou' can be shown to mean the same thing only by maintaining that the difference between their senses is simply an apparent difference, such as exists between a 'collective aggregate' and a 'distributive aggregate,' as between a forest and its trees. An individual tree, however, is not the same as all the trees taken together; and to assert, moreover, a connection as subject and predicate between a term distinguished by 'invisibility,' as denoted by 'That'—the Infinite—and one distinguished by 'visibility,' as denoted by 'Thou'—the finite—is against the evidence of our senses, and can be justified only by supposing that the distinctions are but the modifications of 'Ignorance,' which we are told is no reality. The connection implying identity can be constituted only by the exclusion of this mutual difference and characteristic, as well as by the omission of all difference of time and place, which cannot but be present in thought. Since each term is qualified by the other, they cannot be regarded as identical; and if they cannot be shown to mean the same thing, the great sentence fails to enunciate a truth.[1]

And here we note again the radical original inconsistency of founding a system of pantheism on the authority of revelation. Pantheism and revelation mutually exclude each other. If revelation is true, pantheism is false; if pantheism is true, revelation is out of the question. According to the teaching of the Vedānta, the Veda cannot be the revealer of the mind and will of God, for we should then have a duality, whereas there is no distinction between the Veda and Brahma. And an impersonal Being, who cannot think, but is Thought itself, cannot communicate itself, can reveal nothing. The Vedic revelation preceded a formulated pantheism, and ought to have corrected the vagaries of the authors of the

[1] See Jacob's 'Manual of Pantheism,' pp. 88–95.

Upanishads, instead of the latter superseding it by the inferences of their own reasoning. But the Upanishads claim to be founded on philosophic thinking, more than on revelation. So unlike, indeed, is the theology of the Upanishads and the Vedas, that it is distinctly said that a knowledge of Brahma is impossible by the Veda,[1] and that 'the Self is seen by subtle seers through their sharp and subtle intellect.'[2] Pantheism is in its essence the idolatry of intellect, a system well suited to the imperious and subtle Brāhman mind; and *Advaitism* is the issue reached by a process of philosophic speculation, starting with improper assumption, and conducted in a fallacious method, confounding, as we have seen, the method of thought with the method of knowledge. The phenomena that pass through our consciousness do not necessarily form knowledge. By knowledge is meant some fact of consciousness which corresponds with some reality in Nature, which becomes equally certain to other minds, and can stand the test of the common reason of humanity. The two general Vedāntic ideas of Brahma and Māyā, and the supreme announcement 'That art Thou,' are not universal convictions; they are not the ideas of any other country on the globe; and so the religion that contains them can never aspire to be the absolute and universal religion of mankind. They are the conventions and assumptions of a certain class of minds that are obliged to impose one theory on another, in order to build up an imaginary system of things. The Vedāntist of the Advaita school first reduces all things to these two principles, or, as he regards it, to one general truth, and then from this single source, knowledge, as such, emerges, regarding all things human and Divine, and the most important doctrines relating to God, and Nature, and the human soul become logical deductions from such

[1] Katha.-Upan., i. 2, 23. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 3, 12.

generalizations. But a system, however logical, condemns itself when it contradicts any of these natural convictions which are intended to save us from the folly of our own ratiocinations.[1] In intellectual activity we must always be ready to correct our logic by our intuitive beliefs and by actual experience, such as the universal conviction in the human mind of separate personalities. The sphere of demonstration is to be limited and corrected by truths obtained from other sources of knowledge. Logic itself teaches that, instead of identifying subject and object, recognised distinctions are also entitled to be called knowledge. An object cannot be known by an agent unless it be distinguished from the agent; and to be so distinguished is to be apprehended in the relation of diversity, as in the great sentence 'That art Thou.'

If we turn now to the moral and religious aspect of the subject, we shall find this crowning assumption of the Vedānta—the essential identity and absorption of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul—attended by still more disastrous consequences.

The idea of the Advaita system, or 'One without a second'—*ekam eva advitīyam*—is not without a certain grandeur; but it is a metaphysical elevation purchased at the expense of a moral. It is the distortion of a vital truth—a truth essential to Christianity and all true religion, viz., that self or *self-will* is to be lost in the Supreme Self, in order that God in our life may be all in all. God is God, and man is creature; and having the Divine life breathed into us, and being made, morally, in the image of God, the human and the Divine are in essence one, just as a son is one in nature with his father, though not the same. Thus, the glory of man is to be morally one with

[1] See an article in the *Indian Evangelical Review*, July, 1874, on 'The Logic of the Vedānta.'

God, in thought and desire and will. The identity is to consist in the perfect oneness of man's will with God's; and when this harmony is secured, through complete self-surrender, as it was pre-eminently in Christ, the will is for the first time free and strong, emancipated from self-will, and the height of true manhood and Divine bliss is attained. We are not to lose our consciousness in the Divine consciousness, but our self-will in the Divine Will, so as to be able to say, in the spirit, though not in the same sense, of the words of Christ, 'I and the Father are one.' In our times of moral struggle, conscience is to respond to the Divine Law; in our passionate hours, we are to subside into God's calm grace; in our days of sorrow, we are to lose ourselves in God's more exceeding joy.

If the Indian ideal taught that the power within that 'makes for righteousness,' while being in a most true sense ourselves, is still 'not ourselves'; that the voice of conscience is the voice of a Higher Self in every man; that according to the oracle of the Attic sage, it is the 'God-like voice opposing me even in little things if I am about to do anything not rightly'—that is to say, if it were the voice of a more Divine and enduring Self that stands above and behind the habitual Self—then we might regard it as one of the happiest expressions of this particular truth ever reached. Butler's supremacy of conscience and Kant's 'moral imperative'—the sense of 'ought'—within us, are the index of a Higher Personality, whence they emanate, and of whose character they are the expression. The moral law carries in its centre the evidence of a Moral Lawgiver, and reveals the presence of *another* Self within and yet above our own.

'A voice within forbids, and summons us to refrain;
And if we bid it to be silent, it yet is not still; it is not in our control;

It acts without our control, without our asking, against our will :
It is *in* us, it belongs to us, but it is not *of* us ; it is *above* us.
It is moral, it is intelligent ; it is not *we*, nor at our bidding ;
It pervades mankind as one life pervades the trees.'

But to affirm, as does the auto-monist Vedāntist, that everything is Brahma, and that the human soul is *itself* Brahma, and that all differences are explained by the aid of the doctrine of Māyā, is to rob religion and morality of all meaning, to cut away the very basis of moral life. No amount of 'extraneous theistic or ethical decoration' can make such a system other than a non-theological and non-ethical system. It is to starve the moral sense and stifle the religious nature of man, which means nothing if it does not live by prayer. For there is nothing higher in such a system than the wisdom of the human soul. There is no theology or theosophy, but an arrogant *psychosophy*. There is no higher moral appeal than the man's own judgment. There is no loftier and inspiring worship than that of *Self*. The 'light within the ether of the heart' is the light that lightens all the world !

If it were not the height of paradox, it would be, if taken literally, the depth of profanity ; for what would it amount to? The Bible, *e.g.*, the Book that has done more for the race in its sorrow and sin and moral degradation than all other books put together, would have to be rewritten from cover to cover, and where the word God occurs the word Man would have to be substituted, as, indeed, has been actually done in one of the issues of the *Brahmavādin*,[1] where, in the light of the new-found potentiality of man, which the writer claims to be 'the grand promise of the Upanishads,' the verse in the eighth Psalm is no longer to be read, 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth ! who hast set Thy

[1] November 9, 1895.

glory above the heavens'; but, 'O man! O man! how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens—who art thyself the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the God that made them all.' If that is the Vedānta it is most certainly doomed. Such a thought would be counted blasphemy by the Western world. But, happily, this extraordinary aberration of mind has as yet gone no further than paper, and there, perhaps, it can do little harm beyond administering a dose of opium to the soul that absorbs it.

It is an extravagant enlargement of an ancient conceit. A favourite theory of the great Christian visionary Swedenborg was that 'man is a kind of very minute God,' and 'God is the grand man.' This doctrine was as old as Plato's *Macrocosm* and *Microcosm.* Ancient philosophy counted the human soul, known by and to itself, to be a microcosm or epitome of the great universe. It is natural to man to make himself the measure of the universe—*i.e.*, to take the little universe of being, which he knows so directly and well, to be the *analogon* or image of the greater universe.[1] The Protagorean thesis, '*Homo Mensura*'—man the measure of things—that things are to us only what we can discern of them, may be a useful guide within certain limits, but when pushed too far it becomes self-destructive. Science becomes impossible, when the individual soul is made to be the final and only measure of being. And there is a similar collapse of the moral nature when no relationship other than identity, which is not a relation, subsists between our soul and another, and all souls with God.

The great value of Christianity is that it delivers us from such a religion of self-introspection; that it reveals from a source higher than ourselves the terrible dangers into which

[1] See Noah Porter's 'Human Intellect,' pp. 99–101.

we run when we take to an overmuch studying of ourselves, in the hope of rising above ourselves. When man has no elevating force outside him, as his attraction upwards, he sinks inevitably downwards, as seen in the lowest superstition and formalism of the practical Buddhism of Thibet, China, and Japan, the founder having had no place for God in his system. Christianity having, in direct communication with its centre, a lofty and lovely Christ, the attractive force of a Divine love from above must be ever drawing upwards, and thus developing by a spiritual evolution all persons in the direct ratio of their living belief. To hold, as does the Vedāntist and theosophist, and, in a different way, the modern Positivist, that the highest human soul is the highest spiritual pinnacle in the whole universe, is as unreasonable as it is ineffective for the moral progress of man. Humility is the very last virtue which is becoming to a being whose nature is unsurpassed by any other in the universe: and what becomes of aspiration? The difference between a subjective religious system and true theology is that the latter supplies a real force, in the Divine mind and will, by which the believer is kept to his duty, in spite of his own willingness to relieve himself from it. In Hindū philosophy duty or *dharma* is defined[1] as 'a meaning deduced from injunction,' whose authority is seated in usage and tradition; but in such a force there is none of the progress that comes from a man's fidelity to his own sense of right, ever stimulated by reference to the will of God.

The fundamental objection to this all-comprehensive system, which would formulate a psychological solution of the mystery of existence in a science of the Infinite, is that it *does not tally with the experience* which it is bound to reckon with; nor does it solve the difficulty as to the

[1] Pūrva Mimānsa.

existence within the universe of immoral agents and moral evil. This distinction between phenomenal things and *acting persons*, between Nature and individual moral agency, is well touched in Wordsworth's noonday hymn :

> 'Look up to heaven ! the industrious Sun
> Already half his race hath run :
> He cannot halt nor go astray,
> But our immortal spirits may.'

And if they do they may regret their failure, but who is there to judge them for it ; and why should they judge themselves ? If we possess an ideal and do not reach it, there is no more to be said than when a musician fails in executing a piece of music as well as he can imagine himself to have executed it. The belief that God commands us is a far greater power than the belief that only our own nature suggests and enjoins a particular course of action. The belief that we grieve One who loves us and hates sin is a far greater power than the conviction that we are falling below the level of our own aspirations. It is all very flattering to be told, as we are in the *Brahmavādin*, that man is 'eternally pure and perfect in his real self'; but it is, nevertheless, the rooted conviction that *some one else* of far greater truth and holiness than ourselves is concerned with us, and indignant with us, and pricking our conscience, and inflicting on us the anguish of remorse, thereby enabling men to do what otherwise they could never do. The subjective systems do not apply any sharp spur to the *conscience and the will ;* and hence their weakness, and hence men approve them.[1]

A true and complete system of philosophy must be in harmony with all the complex facts of man's intellectual, moral and spiritual experience. It cannot be reckoned

[1] See an article in the *Spectator*, July 17, 1886.

sound and trustworthy if it leaves out of account the most authoritative element in the universal experience of mankind, the moral sense, and disregards its phenomena. The phenomena of mental consciousness have received in Hindūism full attention, because ignorance is regarded as the origin of human wretchedness, and knowledge the sovereign remedy; whereas in Christianity, where sin is the source of the world's misery, and moral perfection comes through Christ, *conscience* is assigned that true supremacy which belongs to it in the constitution of our nature. A system, therefore, deserves acceptance in proportion as it agrees with itself, and also satisfies the essential wants of our whole being, and no philosophy is complete or moral that does not take into account the *existence of moral evil* in our world. There is little reference to sin in the Vedānta, because sin is known and felt only where God is known and felt as a Personal Being, as the Supreme Holiness. The Upanishads are confessedly, as we have seen, a search after God—a lofty and intensely earnest quest, it is true, but still only a search. We do not stand in His very presence; but He is identified with the sum of things, and therefore we must attribute to Him, without distinction, all the qualities we find in the universe; and sin and crime are as much justified, in the nature of things, as goodness, righteousness, and truth. The supreme Brahma is essentially unmoral; and therefore moral distinctions are not eternal. Says the *Brahmavādin*: 'The distinctions of right and wrong are mere appearances, which will vanish as soon as the dream state of life is dispelled.'[1] The frightful havoc which such a conception works in the idea of sanctity, we hardly dare to dwell upon. It overturns the moral foundations of the universe. The worst evil found in man becomes an attribute of Deity.

[1] June 19, 1897.

How can sanctity be predicated of the Self which becomes the real agent of the worst crimes committed by all selves? God is reduced to a non-moral existence, exhibiting itself alike in good and evil.

People say they find the doctrine of identity satisfying and consoling. In a sense no doubt it is, when we are no longer required to regard ourselves as sinners; and 'narcotics do satisfy in a way, though not in the same way as food. The house may be burning, the flood may be rising, but the dreamer is in his paradise.' A pang of conscience may at times arouse the illusionist; but sin and discord, self-accusation and shame, are to be smothered in the sense of unreality. Into this world of somnambulism comes the religion of Christ, calling men to awake; telling them that their thought that they are a dream is the dream of their own dreaming; that God is the Living God of unutterable sanctity—Light with no darkness at all. 'It is because the Bible so rigidly keeps to the distinction between light and darkness, holiness and sin, that its pages are so piercingly illuminative in the moral sphere. It is just because Hindū thinkers have confused the two, merging them in something they thought deeper, that their works have proved so comparatively powerless in the domain of the moral life.'[1] The God who made us made us *real;* and real we must remain for all eternity. God is real, the world is real, self is real, sin is real, and judgment real enough to make men tremble. There is no Māyā but what man cheats himself to imagine.

The nearer we get to God, the clearer is our vision of sin. Where there is no deep sense of sin, certain it is that God has not yet been found. In the light of His spotless holiness, as He reveals it to us in the life and work of Christ, we see the blackness and enormity of sin. That was what

[1] See *The Epiphany* (Calcutta), August 24, 1893.

the Apostle Peter felt when the moral power of Christ dawned upon him ; he exclaimed : 'Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord' (Luke v. 8). Honest dealing with personal sin, by searching it out with the searchlight of God, lies at the foundation of all real religion and practical holiness. And one of the most disappointing and confusing facts connected with the modern advocacy of the Vedānta is the glib and easy manner in which its lofty teachings are lightly discussed by minds and lips that are known to be impure. For a man of sinful heart and life to talk about identity with the Infinite and Holy God, as though it were a trivial commonplace, or only the logical conclusion of a syllogism, is the height of profanity. Spiritual things can be only spiritually discerned. It is impossible to rise in spirituality except on the basis and along the line of true brokenness and contrition of heart. Growth in the knowledge and love of God means growth, first of all, in penitence ; and all knowledge of God is fruitless if it does not lead us in penitent adoration to our knees. The Christian begins his religious life and his path of spirituality *at the Cross*, where he sees sin confessed, condemned, forgiven. That is the only road to real saintliness.

'Eternal Light ! Eternal Light !
How pure the soul must be,
When, placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but, with calm delight,
Can live, and look on Thee !

* * * *

'Oh, how shall I, whose native sphere
Is dark, whose mind is dim,
Before the Ineffable appear,
And on my naked spirit bear
That uncreated beam ?

'There is a way for man to rise
  To that sublime abode :—
An offering and a sacrifice,
A Holy Spirit's energies,
  An Advocate with God :—

'These, these prepare us for the sight
  Of Holiness above :
The sons of ignorance and night
May dwell in the Eternal Light,
  Through the Eternal Love.'

t now remains to show how this Vedānta doctrine of identity and absorption—*Sāyujya*—is strictly consistent with kindred Hindū thought from very early times. What led to it? *Another imposing assumption* based on an imaginary and *pessimistic view of life.*

We must try to put ourselves in the position of those ancient thinkers in order to discover the difficulties they were labouring under, and the psychological puzzles they pursued with such plodding perseverance, and that drove them to such extreme conclusions. And with them life was not a blessing as we regard it now, living in peaceful times, but a constant peril and a curse. It was so with Solomon; it was so with Buddha: existence meant suffering, and all was 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' The first of the 'four noble truths' which Buddha professed to have discovered was not the knowledge of his own depravity of heart, or of the origin of sin, or of the holiness and love of God—on these points he was an out-and-out agnostic; all that he claimed to have discovered, and which was to enlighten the world, was that 'Existence means suffering'; and as a devout Buddhist counts his beads, he mutters, *Anitya*, *dukha*, *anatta*, 'Transcience, sorrow, unreality.'

A very different picture is presented in the Vedic hymns. In Vedic times a healthful, cheerful view was taken of life;

there was a genial naturalness about it; but, first of all, in the Upanishads, a heavy gloom seems to have settled on men's spirits, a dull, sombre autumn day, and life becomes, not only a mystery, but a burden and a terror. How was this? The strange, weird dogma of *metempsychosis*, emerging about this time—how and whence, it is difficult to say—cast a pall of gloom and sadness over all existence. That belief, which, as shown by Tylor in his 'Primitive Culture,'[1] was widely spread among the lower races of men, and, in the view of Gough, was adopted by the Brāhmans from the aborigines of the country, or, as others think, from the Egyptians, and was at length systematized by Buddha, is the great nightmare of Indian philosophy, and underlies the teaching of the Upanishads. These old books express the desire of the individual soul (*jīva*) for deliverance from prolonged separate existence (*samsāra*), and from the liability to pass through an infinite variety of bodies, terrestrial and celestial, each step being determined by the deeds (the *Karma*) of the life that went before.

Between the age of the Vedic bard and priest, who sang and sacrificed at the primitive altars, and that of the serious thinkers of Buddhist monasteries, who penetrated to the centre of things, and advanced to the mountain heights of vision, great historical changes must have taken place. To the former, this terrestrial life and the phenomena of the outer world bounded their horizon; to the latter, the human soul and the migration of the ego become the special object of study, and its surmounting all finite rewards and punishments in a final release (*nirvāna*), the chief good. The Vedic sacrificer, bent on the possession of worldly goods, seeks to obtain the favour of the gods. The Buddhist sage sees in the chances and changes of life the play of great cosmic forces, and his aim is so to master them through

[1] Vol. ii. p. 6.

philosophic knowledge as to escape from them into a higher condition. It is true that the idea of *mukti*, or emancipation, is pre-Buddhistic, for the final release of the soul from transmigration is one of the chief burdens of the Upanishads; but Sākya Muni, who flourished in the latter half of the sixth century B.C.,[1] systematized it when he insisted on the comparative worthlessness of rites, and ceremonies, and sacrifices, and that in *nirvāna* alone could man find full relief from the temptations and miseries of life. In the subsequent systems of philosophy, a clear distinction is drawn between the active delights of heaven (*svarga*) and the unbroken calm that follows the final release[2] (*apavarga*).

It is interesting to note that very similar religious philosophical speculations were current about the same time in Greece, in the mysteries of the Orphean cult, and among the Pythagorean sects, and, later on, in the closely related conceptions of Plato, who was born some fifty years after the death of Buddha. Societies of devotees, separated from the world, and seeking a salvation by means of sacred study—the contemplation of pure wisdom in 'the sanctuaries of silence'—and of difficult ceremonies of purification and consecration, sprang up both in Greece and India.[3] The austere type of Buddha's self-renunciation, however—that of a homeless beggar, a mendicant friar—finds no counterpart in the more cheerful West; while the personality of the great Buddha himself, with the nimbus of miracles surrounding his life,[4] is altogether different from

[1] See Hardy's 'Manual of Buddhism,' p. 366.

[2] Wilson's 'Essays,' iii. 113.

[3] See Lewes' 'History of Philosophy,' i. 22.

[4] According to the 'Lalita Vistāra,' at the supreme moment of Buddha's enlightenment, actual flames of light issued from the crown of his head.

that of the Grecian sage.[1] But both classes of thinkers were alike involved in a hopeless pessimism. This present world is a gloomy prison of suffering and of death, a continuous flux of becoming and passing away, of 'immaterial seeming'; and no peace is to be found short of complete release from the limitations of such a life. And the inexorable law which subjects all to a common fate can be *explained only by postulating the doctrines of transmigration*—birth followed by death in an infinite chain of lives, alternated by periods of reward or retribution in heavenly worlds or in infernal regions.

Now, such a doctrine, inaccurately called in Buddhism the transmigration of the *soul*—since its founder denied its existence—and appearing in India as a subject of speculation long before the time of Buddha, proved a burden too great to bear, and some relief had to be found. The absorbing question was, How may the misery of existence be averted? The answer was, By avoiding births. How were they to be avoided? By avoiding actions, good and bad. To avoid actions, desires must be eradicated; and desires could become extinct only *when individual consciousness was lost;* and that was possible only *when the individual soul was absorbed into the Supreme*, according to Hindūism, or when, according to Buddhism, the *Arhat* enters *Nirvāna*, and ceases to exist. Absorption, and consequently identity, were thus the haven of rest found in the Upanishads and the Vedānta for the soul tossed and wearied by transmigration. Such was the Hindū philosopher's answer to the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' and which was put in the form, 'How may I be released from the misery of *Samsāra*,' or earthly existence?

Not knowing the Christian view of life and suffering, in

[1] See Oldenberg's 'Ancient India,' p. 78 *et seq.*

which both are regarded as educational steps to a higher, fuller life beyond, the problem was, how to shake off all personality and break the iron chain of repeated births—cut short the eighty-four lakhs through which a person might have to pass. The solution was *mukti*—liberation, absorption. And, according to the Upanishads, Divine knowledge is the instrument, and meditation the means by which the spirit is to be freed. To avoid all contact with the world, to avoid distracting works and profitless rituals, and to meditate on the identity of the internal with the external Spirit, till their oneness is realized—this has been the essential teaching of the Upanishads as understood by expounders of them from the most ancient times. The early Vedic faith of an immortality with the gods disappears; and for the mass of men the future is one weary round of births, a hopeless struggle with the Karmic forces of demerit and retribution, and for the select few the absorption and extinction of the individual soul in the Universal Soul. Such was the highest conclusion of Indian thought—based on what is now seen to have been a mistaken and pessimistic view of life, and on a formulated dogma unsupported, as we shall see, by any evidence, and untaught in the hymns of the Rig-Veda. These two assumptions afforded the first motive to Indian speculation, and were at the root of Indian philosophy and religion. 'These great ideas,' says the *Brahmavādin*, 'form the woof and the warp of Indian thought, permeating its whole outlook, its attitude towards life, its most sacred aspirations, and its most cherished wishes and hopes.' [1]

What if the whole should be an elaborate and subtle process of false reasoning? And if the dogma of transmigration cannot be established, then the entire framework and *raison d'être* of the Upanishads and the Vedānta would

[1] May 22, 1897.

be removed, though all that is true and beautiful in them would still remain.

To this subject, then, we must now turn; and seeing that there is no Hindū belief more universally held than that of *Karma* and transmigration—two distinct doctrines, but united in Hindūism, whatever differences on other points may characterize the sects; that it is the underlying thought of all Hindū philosophy and religion, and the one that clashes most with the essentials of Christianity—atonement, free forgiveness, and salvation through faith in Christ—thereby offering the greatest resistance to the acceptance of the Gospel, the subject will have to be considered at some length, and the counter-presentation of the Christian truth be clearly given.

Before passing to this, however, there is *one other assumption* which we must just notice, without which the doctrine of identity and absorption could not be established. The Vedānta teaches that Brahma is illusorily associated with three kinds of bodies, and that these form the actual covering of individual souls. The 'casual body' (*kārana-sarīra*) comes first, but, being identified with Māyā, is no real body; and this union is likened to a state of dreamless sleep. The second is the 'subtle' or psychic body (*sūkshma-sarīra*), corresponding to the *antah-karana*, or 'internal organ'—composed of sense, volition, and cognition, and constituting a person, a living, individual spirit (*jīvātma*). This subtle covering—reminding us of the *σωμα πνευματικον* of the Apostle Paul—accompanies the soul through all its migrations; and the union is likened to a state of dream. Lastly, there is the 'gross corporeal body' (*sthūla-sarīra*), enveloping the subtle covering, and partaking of the various forms of embodied existence—organic and inorganic, animate and inanimate; and this is likened to the waking state. A man is thus most fully

awake and alive when he is leading the ordinary earthly life; and he is in a state of profound slumber, unconscious of his own existence, when he reaches the highest point of spiritual development, and *most resembles Brahma*.

But it is the second state that we have now to do with. And it is taught, especially in the Bhagavad-gītā, that the form a man thinks of when dying will be the form to which he will go; and that form is the one on which he will have meditated most during life. Arjuna is, therefore warned by Krishna to be careful how he thinks, for by his thoughts, day by day, he is building a form which in the death-hour will present itself before him, and will carry him to his own place.[1] This form corresponds with the subtle or *psychic body*, and the teaching is profound and suggestive. It is, however, marred by the fact that, Vedāntic happiness consisting as it does in the *loss of individual consciousness*, the psychic body, which serves as the organ of the spirit and of the principle of consciousness, and which remains after the physical body dies, will also *finally perish*. But this assumption, again, is unwarranted, and unsupported by any evidence. It is simply a theory advanced for the support of another theory. The only reason why its destruction is assumed is to maintain consistently the fundamental position of the philosophy that *the highest happiness* consists in the loss of individual consciousness. But does it? It is begging the whole question. It may do so in the absence of any knowledge of the future life as known to Christians. But the Christian philosopher stands on higher ground. He knows that the psychic or 'spiritual body,' with its individual consciousness, lives on and lives for ever; since his incarnate Lord is now in heaven, in a glorified and conscious humanity, the pledge and promise of the future condition of the saints, with whom the day of resurrection

[1] Bhagavad-gītā, viii. 1–10.

from death is the moment of the birth of the celestial body. And here, again, we see ancient problems solved, and erroneous views of life corrected in the Christian revelation.

The *Nirvāna* of unconsciousness—whether formulated in Hindūism or in Buddhism, for the final condition is practically the same—was thus, after all, a makeshift, a desperate conclusion forced by a pessimistic view of life and by belief in transmigration; the desire for non-existence, so utterly contradicted by human nature at its best, is to be looked at as the outcome of despair. Where there was no personal life realized at the basis of things, and no self-consciousness in the Maker of the universe, India could find no place or ground for the permanence of self-consciousness in finite persons. *Nirvāna* was welcomed as a relief. But where God is believed to be a Person, the sorrow and evil that belong to life are known to be *not life*, and in Christian faith are seen to be transfigured and surmounted; and with such a thought existence becomes a blessing and not a curse, and belief in immortality rational and desirable. An empty, lifeless universe is a miserable substitute for one of infinite potentialities and endless progress. One of the most striking features of Christian experience, one of the greatest gifts that Christ has imparted, is the vivid sense of possessing a personal and continuous life; and wherever the Christian Gospel is received, this distinct type of character is created, the opposite of that developed in the East. 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' asks the Christian. 'What shall I do to inherit eternal extinction of life?' asks the Brāhman and the Buddhist.

We thus see that the value of the results obtained by reasoning depends entirely on the accuracy of the observation that supplies the premises on which the reasoning proceeds. And if the ancient observation and philosophy

of life and death were wrong, and so supplied false premises in the dogma of transmigration, and in the supposition of the destruction of the psychic body—the organ of consciousness—then the startling conclusion arrived at in the affirmation of identity and absorption is, to say the least, fallacious.

CHAPTER XII

THE DOCTRINES OF KARMA AND REDEMPTION

Hindū View of Sin—Doctrine of Karma—Its Truth and Defects—Fully developed in the Sānkhya Philosophy and in Buddhism—Blind Causation takes the Place of God—No forgiveness of Sins in Nature—A Necessitated Man—Justice and Mercy irreconcilable in Hindūism—Forgiveness and Penalty in Christianity—Revealed Truth necessary—Redemptive Agencies—Application of Two Physical Laws—Intimations of the heart.

ON the subject of sin, Hindūism exhibits one of those strange contradictions that so bewilder the practical mind. It proceeds, indeed, from the prior question—whether we are to regard ourselves as God or not God. And on this, the most important of all questions, Hindūism lets us take our choice, and tolerates discordant sects. But a system that includes both non-Duality and Duality, both Advaitic and Dvaitic thought, that declares with one voice that the human and the Divine Soul are identical, and with another that they are distinct, is surely a contradiction in something more than terms, and can scarcely be considered a safe guide.

The view we take of sin follows, of necessity, from the view we take of God. If we declare, with the pantheistic Vedāntist, that *we* are God (Brahma), sin becomes an

absurdity, not to say a profanity. And so we find the Swāmi Vivekānanda saying, in his Chicago speech: 'Ye, *divinities* on earth, sinners? It is a sin to call a man a sinner. It is a standing libel on human nature.' Of course it is, if the human is only another name for the Divine—if we regard man as a divinity. If, on the other hand, we hold that man is a creature and God the Creator—the two, the finite and the Infinite, for ever remaining distinct—then sin finds a real place, since it arises from the conflict of the human will with the Divine.

But, according to what is claimed to be the highest philosophy of Hindūism, sin is a complete delusion; there really no such thing at all. Creation is *māyā*, the outcome of *pradhāna*—the cosmical illusion—the result of deceptive dualism; and the true object of *yoga* is to overcome the illusion, and realize Advaitism—*Ekam eva advitīyam*—'One only without a second.' Individualism thus springs from *māyā*; individual existence is a dream; and it follows that the offences and sins for which the illusory individual conscience blames itself are equally unreal; and the great object of life, according to this same philosophy, is a purely intellectual one, not a moral one: it is not to get rid of sin, but to rid ourselves of the false idea that we *are* sinners; for Vedāntism tells us we are God under the bondage of delusion.

And yet, if this is the philosophy of Hindūism, what do we find in practice? We find, first of all, in the Vedas, and before the primitive mind was obscured by philosophic speculation, that sin holds a very real place. In several of the hymns of the Rig-veda, as we have seen, sin is felt to be a great calamity. It is a 'rope' or 'bond,' from which the sinner prays to be released. It is a heavy 'burden' which the gods alone can take away. It is that which incurs the wrath of Varuna, and separates from him.

Nevertheless, it was certain sinful *actions*, such as falsehood, theft, gambling, sorcery, adultery, disobedience to parents, non-performance of religious rites, rather than a sinful *nature*, that were deplored; and so we do not meet, in the Vedas, with that mortal hatred of wrong and that anguish of penitence which are so characteristic of the Bible. Still, that Vedic man admitted that he was a sinner rather than a divinity, and felt the need of sacrifice, there can be no doubt at all. No language, not even the Jewish, contains so many words relating to sacrifice as Sanskrit.

And coming down to the present day, what do we find? If sin is unreal, its *penalties* certainly are not, if we may judge from the hold that the doctrine of *Karma* has upon the mind of all Hindūs. There are few beliefs so vitally held in India as that of Karma, which teaches that sins bring terrible punishments; that as men sow, so must they reap, in this life and in future lives. The Hindū sacred books, especially the Laws of Manu, contain elaborate detailed lists of the fearful penalties attaching in the next life to the chief sins against Hindū morality, along with equally elaborate prescriptions for the various expiations, penances, self-inflicted tortures, by which these sins are to be atoned for in the present life.

Thus we see that the Hindū evidently acts upon a belief of the reality of sin; he accepts the verdict of his conscience, while yet holding, according to the orthodox philosophy of Hindūism, both sin and conscience to be of the nature of illusion. How theory and practice are reconcilable must be left for others to explain. But the theory has not succeeded in blinding the eyes of millions of Hindūs to the fact that they *are* sinners, that they have been sinners, and that they are suffering and will yet suffer the real and terrible penalties of their sins. This is implied in the doctrine of Karma.

The word 'Karma,' fast becoming naturalized in the English language, is a Sanskrit word meaning *action*. In the Upanishads and the Bhagavad gītā it has three meanings: work in general; sacrificial ritual; and the predetermining influence of action.[1] The last is the sense in which it is now generally used, meaning action as cause, action as effect; so that it becomes the general expression for a sequence in Nature. It stands for the unbroken chain of cause and effect, in which every link depends on the link that precedes it; out of which no link can drop, for law is inviolable, subject neither to breach nor change.[2] Where the will has operated, the action is inevitable. The will is the energizing force; the action is the mere crystallization of the will. We have been making for ourselves, by the creative force of our will, certain causes, that go forth from the realm of mind into the realm of matter—the sphere of our actions; so that day by day we are living in the results which we have ourselves created. Hence we are born into the world, time after time, with the general mould of our life, cast in the preceding incarnations. Thus, the physical environment that limits our energy, and all the inequalities of our present life, are said to be the result of certain habits and actions belonging to a previous state of existence. It is our previous Karma which rules our present lot.

Now, that there is a true law underlying the doctrine of Karma is, of course, admitted. Christianity recognises it quite as much as Hindūism. But in Hindūism it has become complicated by being combined with the dogma of transmigration, which will be discussed in a separate chapter; and its value has been thereby lessened and

[1] See Gītā, xviii.
[2] See 'Karma,' a lecture by Mrs. Besant at Chicago.

obscured. The two are by no means necessarily connected. Karma is a law that runs through Nature, whether the soul migrates or not. But Hindūism, knowing only the law, the law of natural consequence—all the dispositions and actions of men flowing, naturally and necessarily, from the original *gunas* or qualities of Nature, namely: *sattva*, goodness; *rajas*, passion; *tamas*, darkness—and not understanding the Christian explanation of life and suffering, nor the doctrine of Divine grace, which confronts and counteracts the law, as we shall see hereafter, has to postulate an unbroken chain of cause and effect, an infinite series of causes, which is unthinkable.

All physical things, according to this doctrine, are effects—effects of previous causes; and these we must trace back and still back, for there can be no stopping in the process of reasoning. The inequalities of the present life are said to be the result of works in a previous life; but this only removes the difficulty one single step, since the question recurs: Whence *those* works and the inequalities in *that* life? And so Hindūism is compelled to fly from stage to stage, until it is forced to declare that the world never had a beginning; and the idea of an intelligent First Cause, the Maker and Moulder of all things, becomes unnecessary. But this assumption traverses the dicta of modern science, and involves difficulties far greater than those it is intended to remove. An endless succession of beginningless effects—an infinite series of antecedents—is as unthinkable as 'a stream without a source'; for it violates the very nature of thought, which is to demand a cause that shall have no antecedent. 'If each link of the chain hangs on another, the whole will *hang*, and *only hang* even in eternity, unsupported, like some stark serpent—unless you find a hook for it.'[1] How can we conceive of an endless

[1] Hutchinson Stirling's 'Philosophy and Theology,' p. 262.

succession of conscious acts or states—an endless succession, *i.e.*, of changes—under the condition of duration; how can an eternal duration be now actually past? There must, therefore, have been a first action in some body, which determined the next body the soul would take. Before there could be merit or demerit, beings must have existed and acted; and we are led back to a first man, such as we find described in the Book of Genesis. It is the old question: 'Which was the first, the hen or the egg?' Human souls, whose reason for existence is action and the fruit of action, cannot be eternal; while the assumption of the existence of a First Cause of all, in the sense of 'a self-moved mover,' has been recognised by philosophers from Plato to Hegel, and on to Herbert Spencer, as a positive notion, 'a necessity of thought.'

And the difficulties are moral as well as metaphysical. The inequalities of life doubtless present a sore problem for all religions; but the Hindū law of Karma only enlarges and prolongs the mystery by making it eternal, backwards and forwards; and we have a merciless world of births and deaths, without beginning, and, for all practical purposes, without end, with a ruthless law of necessity imposed upon it. Who or what is responsible for all this—for these eternally existing souls suffering from a strange and hopeless injustice? It is of little use to say it is all *māyā*—a dream of the absolute; for a bad dream is quite bad enough while it lasts. The Christian idea that the inequalities of this life constitute a probation—a discipline—specially adapted to the nature of each human being, in order to test, and try, and perfect the character, seems both a more hopeful and a more merciful view.

That there is such a law as Karma—that the deed cannot be separated from its consequence—no one can deny; and the practical value of such a truth, if brought to

bear on the conduct of life, ought to be immense. As the Indian proverb has it,

> 'Who plants mangoes, mangoes shall he eat;
> Who plants thorn-bushes, thorns shall wound his feet';

or, in the striking words of an old Sanskrit sage in one of the Indian epics:[1]

> 'Yes, all the deeds that men have done,
> In light of day, before the sun,
> Or veiled beneath the gloom of night,
> The good, the bad, the wrong, the right—
> These, though forgotten, reappear,
> And travel, silent, in their rear.'

So, also, the English poet, Sir Edwin Arnold:

> 'For will makes deeds,
> And deeds make Karma, and the Karma makes
> The outcoming. As when ye press the clay
> This way and that, and see it harden, so
> Men for themselves shape Fate. Shadow and Light
> Are not more surely tied unto each,
> Than man to Karma, and to Karma, man.'

It is the great moral law enunciated by the Apostle Paul: 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap' (Gal. vi. 7). That truth pervades the teaching of the Bible. In the Book of Psalms we read: 'Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for Thou renderest to every man according to his work' (Ps. lxii. 12). Again, we read in the Old Testament: 'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings' (Jer. xvii. 10). And in the New Testament: 'Each man shall bear his own burden' (Gal. vi. 5). 'For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of

[1] Mahābhārata, xii.

Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad' (2 Cor. v. 10).

Thus we see that Hinduism has no monopoly of the doctrine of Karma. It is clearly taught in the Bible, too. And why do they both teach it? Because it is true—true in the nature of things, and true to the voice of conscience. It is a true conception that all deeds, be they good or evil, will inevitably bear fruit according to their nature. In the natural world we expect it. Sow for a certain thing, and you will get it. The pea contains the pod; the flower contains the vine in embryo. And the laws of the human soul are as certain as the laws of nature. There can be no accident in morals. As a man makes himself, so he must be. There is an exact answer to every deed of disobedience, just as an echo answers to the sound. If we transgress the laws of our nature, the punishment must come. The penalties of a broken law are as sure as the existence of the law itself. There can be no caprice here. There is One who rules men according to their merit or demerit; and by the true law of Karma, as taught in the Bible, He condemns to punishment those who condemn themselves to sin. In the words of the poet Whittier:

'We shape *ourselves* the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made,
And fill our future atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.

'The tissues of the life to be
We weave with colours *all our own*,
And in the field of destiny
We reap *as we have sown*.

'Still shall the soul around it call
The shadows which it gathered here,
And, painted on the eternal wall,
The past shall reappear.'

Full and exact retribution for sin there is not in this world; and this fact, that the wicked often go, to the eye of man, unpunished, and the good unrewarded, is an irresistible argument, to all reflective and righteous minds, for a future state of rewards and punishments. The present life, according to the Christian view, is not the sequel to a former life, or we ought to remember it, and ought to enter life much more mature than the infants that we are; but it is our first state of discipline—a school in which we are intended to learn to be wise, to take kindly warning from the checks and restraints, and often sore calamities, which God, in His wisdom and mercy, sets about us here. And when our present life is over we shall be carried on, not in this same material world, but in a more advanced spiritual world, with our bad ways uncorrected, or with our good ways established, each man receiving 'according to his works.'

And why does God attach suffering and penalty to sin? That we may learn to hate it—not simply that Karma may do its work. He makes sin bitter that we may avoid it and forsake it. It all has a moral end. Punishment, as taught by Christ, is an aspect of love. It is love unveiling to us the hidden, intrinsic quality of evil; so as to bring the sinner, as shown in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, to a better mind.[1]

But to effect this there must be *purpose*. The blending of justice and mercy in the act of retribution implies a loving Will, an intelligent and benevolent Being, not a mere name—Karma—supposed to be endowed with most wonderful qualities, though destitute of mercy.

Karma, to the Hindū, stands, as we have seen, for the unbroken chain of cause and effect—impersonal and unalterable law—in which existence is woven into a

[1] See St. Luke xv.

corded series of necessitated acts and results. Even the gods have no power to avert the effects of Karma; they are themselves subject to *Adrishta*—that irresistible something which is felt and 'not seen.' The consequences of acts—merit or demerit—must be completely worked out by an inexorable retribution, which binds act and issue so indissolubly together that every moment of desire or sin must exact its consequent moment of pain. There is no place found for mercy; for mercy can exist only in a world governed by a living, loving, personal God. Even with an English novelist such as George Eliot, when escaping from distinctly Christian thought, there is no divine force so clear as the awful, unrelenting goddess, Nemesis; she can allow no way of escape for the sinner because there is *no forgiveness of sins in Nature;* and she often speaks as though men and women were merely the puppets of irresistible tendencies. And so they must be in a purely natural system. In Hindūism, the soul is tossed hither and thither by a force set in motion by itself alone, which can never be set aside, because its operation depends on past actions wholly beyond control, and even unremembered.

Thus, Karma or *Adrishta* becomes the one and only law of the universe; and that which in Christianity is simply a method of God's moral government is raised to a supremacy over even God Himself. Blind causation takes the place of God. And if matter with the law of *Prakriti*, and souls with the law of *Karma*, can all keep going of themselves, it is hard to see what need there is for a Creator or a Judge, still less for an illusory Īsvara, who is said to be a witness of men's actions, and to reward them according to their works. If there be such a Being, he is painfully limited by a despotism more powerful than he, and cannot be called a Deity at all.

And here it is significant to note that the doctrine of Karma finds its truest place and its most elaborate explanation in the atheistical (*nirīsvara*) system of Kapila, and in that which was the natural result or logical issue of the Sānkhya philosophy—the equally godless system of Buddha. In the Sānkhya, everything is due to producing Nature, or *Prakriti*, whose constituent elements—the *gunas*—act like chords, and bind the spirit with their triple bonds. There is no presiding and interposing Deity. The soul itself is passive; and it is Nature that, with a strange consistency and inconsistency combined, is endowed with the qualities of a thinking mind. The final state of the soul, after it has become wholly separate from matter, through knowledge of the Sānkhya doctrines, is a passionless, unconscious state—the nearest approach to the Buddhistic idea of *Nirvāna*. The present life is an unmixed evil, full of pain, a cruel bondage, as it must ever be in a godless world; and the great aim is to free the soul from every connection with matter.

In Buddhism, both God and the soul have practically no existence. The Brāhmanical God had become an object of terror; and feeling life to be altogether miserable under the world conditions as constituted by Brāhmanism, and seeing no escape from the eternal circle of being while the Brāhmanical Deity was allowed to live, that 'at no point was the circle blessed,' Buddha boldly declared that God was not. As for the soul, he discovered that in his own experience, in spite of all his asceticism, he could not rid himself of pride and self-love; and since belief in the existence of soul was the motive power that kept up the existence of desire, he was finally led to repudiate the doctrine of soul altogether, and to explain the problem of the world by his doctrine of Karma—the survival, not of the soul, but of the *effects* of actions, or

character. The basis of this theory he found in the previous systems of philosophy, in those different kinds of atoms that had existed from all eternity, and that were indestructible. Among these original atoms were those of mind; and as their combinations of thought, and feeling, and desire, which go to make up character, cannot be dissolved by death, they must, unless killed in life, wander about the world like disembodied spirits, until they become re-incarnated in some other body. Thus he arrived at his great doctrine of Karma, which, denying the existence of the soul, maintains that the fruit of actions or character cannot die, but must ever reappear. And since evil is necessary to existence; since 'to be' is to suffer—sorrow being of the very essence of life—existence itself is to be abhorred and renounced. To become entirely free from self-interest, the lower nature must be gradually destroyed; cravings and desires must be starved out, by cutting off the motives for them at their root, and by keeping the unselfish motives—love for others—uppermost. This Buddha sought to effect, not by Divine help, for he knew no merciful Deity, but by his 'noble eightfold path'; and when the thirst for existence was thus quenched, the disciple could enter the blissful state of *Nirvāna*. Buddhism is thus the most determined attempt ever made to solve the problem of the world without God or the soul; and this explains how it is that the doctrine of Karma holds such a prominent place in the Buddhist system. Both in that system and in the atheistic Sānkhya it finds a natural home, and the most fitting soil for its development.

And thus it must ever be in a philosophy *educed from Nature;* for Nature preaches the most crushing fatalism, the most inflexible determinism. When man is regarded as a *part* of Nature, subject like other parts to merely

cosmical laws, it must be so; he is simply a product of antecedents and circumstances, just like a mango on a tree. Action once begun, there is a ceaseless revolving in the wheel of being, in the dread bonds of fate, from which even death allows of no release. But regard man, as the Bible does, as having a place in Nature, but *above* it, and lord of it, and made in the image of his Creator; then his history and destiny are altogether different. A system rooted in Nature will create a relentless Karma; a revelation of Love proclaims justice and the spiritual law of retribution, but, *along with that*, *redemptive forces* to counteract the fatal consequences of man's folly and sin.

Or, looking at the subject from a slightly different standpoint, and taking man rather than Nature as the centre, start from the *speculative reason* only, and it is easy to accept an impersonal Deity, as in pantheism, and therefore an impersonal order of things, in which there is no power of moral initiative, no power to create new sources and conditions of good. 'Law can simply act upon what is, not create what ought to be.' An impersonal Deity, or, what is the same thing, blind causation, means a necessitated man, ruled by inexorable fate—a necessitated mechanism—Karma. And necessity can mend nothing, redeem no one. The doctrine of Karma might perhaps be all right for a good world where the results would be always happy, but it is empty of all hope and comfort for a mingled state of good and evil.[1] 'Faith in it may create Stoics, but will not renew or redeem humanity.'

But start from the *religious consciousness* and the *moral nature*, and then a Personal God, with consciousness and will and love, is a necessity; a Being with a loving purpose, and ruling the world in love, through righteousness, towards righteous ends. And this was the great message

[1] See Principal Fairbairn's 'City of God,' p. 200.

of Christ to man. Evil is unquestionably a fearful thing, and it must have continued its fierce ravages for ever, and Karma its perpetual revolutions, had not *Divine mercy* interposed. In God alone is peace and restoration.

And Hindūism itself, when the *heart* of the people, rather than the heads of its sages, has spoken, has had glimpses of this saving truth. While one section of Hindūism, in Saivaism, has insisted on the stern law of retribution, another section, in Vaishnavaism, has hoped in the Divine mercy, and believed in Divine assistance to remedy man's evil case. Indeed, just as some have lost sight of God's mercy altogether in the doctrine of Karma, so popular superstition has blinded others to the law of retributive justice; and the mere mention of Vishnu's name, or bathing in a sacred stream, has sufficed to claim Divine mercy and forgiveness; as though one could get off, by mere favour or luck, from the action of righteous law, and escape from fulfilling one's personal responsibilities. So impossible is it, apart from Divine Revelation to reconcile mercy and justice.

We see these two conflicting sentiments at work in the Bhagavad-gītā, where Hindū and Christian ideas often appear side by side. In strict consistency, and in accordance with the law of Karma, it should teach no forgiveness. But here and there the instinct of the heart, yearning for a kindly pardon, breaks through the restraints of philosophy; and Krishna is made to say: 'Renouncing all Dharmas, come unto me as your sole refuge. Sorrow not; *I will release you from all sins*' [1]—almost echoing the words of the Bible.

These two schools of thought—conscience, in the philosophic doctrine of Karma, insisting on justice and the working out of natural consequences, and the heart,

[1] Gītā, xviii. 66.

in the intervention of its *avatāras*, hoping for mercy—have never been reconciled in Hindūism. There has been no common meeting-ground for these two truths. In Christianity they meet in the revelation of *Divine Grace* and in the doctrine of Atonement. This revelation alone reconciles the stern mysterious influence of Karma with the Gospel of Forgiveness. And herein lies the glad tidings of the Gospel and the true solution of the difficulty.

We must start, of course, in our inquiry, not with blind causation—impersonal law—but with a Divine Lawgiver, whom Christ represents as a just and loving Father. *From Him* the law proceeds. In considering the dealings of God with men, the Christian, taught by Christ, follows the analogies of parental affection and discipline, rather than the analogies of mere Nature or the hard and heartless law-court.

Now, in every violation of law there are two aspects to be regarded. The one is the disturbance of *personal* relations between two parties; the other is the liability to the *natural consequences* of disobedience, established as a necessary connection of causes with effects. Karma recognises the second, but not the first. Why? Because there is no recognition of a personal, moral Ruler of the universe. It sees the law of justice in the ripening of acts, but not the disturbed personal relations. It takes count of the cosmos, but loses sight of God. It systematizes the secrets of Nature, but knows not the face of the Divine Father behind. Mere law and creation have nothing to do with forgiving trespasses and saving from temptation; but the moment we realize God as 'Our Father,' we know that He *can* forgive us as we need to be forgiven, and that He *can* shield us from temptation. The Hindū form of the doctrine of Karma plainly shows that the conception of the Fatherhood of God is not entertained, and those

who in the present day profess to hold it are bound to modify their ideas of Karma.

We cannot, then, ignore these two aspects of violated law. And looking at the disturbed relations between the offending and the offended party, we presume that these may be set right by a process of reconciliation, and that is what is commonly meant by the forgiveness of sins. Will not God, our Father, like an earthly father, freely forgive all that is strictly personal in the sin—if, indeed, any personal element can be supposed in the case of God—as soon as there is the real and deep repentance of the sinner? Assuredly. He is not vindictive, He cherishes no feeling of resentment; but He longs for reconciliation and for the return of the wayward prodigal to the Divine heart and home.

But if we regard forgiveness as involving the remission of penalty, the question is not so simple, for here we are brought face to face with the natural and inseparable *consequence* of sin—the link that has been wrought into the chain of cause and effect—and which still remains, and that is Karma. We cannot annihilate the past; and how can any penitence of ours set aside inevitable law? If God be the Author of a system of natural laws or the Ruler of a righteous social order, and if sin be regarded as the transgression of such laws, how can He, by any act of His, show compassion and forgiveness to a penitent sinner, and avert those penal consequences that are part of the moral and social order? Must not these laws be as fixed and inexorable as the laws of a purely physical world? Where in such a system is there any room for the efficacy of repentance and for the remission of sins? If Nature or human society reveal anything, they reveal an unforgiving Ruler; so that arguing on the ground of natural reason only, and apart from Revelation, we must see how un-

availing penitence must be to remove the consequences of transgression.

We thus find ourselves in the midst of a system of righteous order, in which all events are linked together by inevitable law, and where no place can be found for forgiveness and remission of sins. It is plain, therefore, that, if they are ever to be granted, it can only be by some *Divine interposition* that shall make them possible, and that shall in some way remove us from the necessary operation of these Karmic laws. And as we realize that the laws we have transgressed are God's laws—the laws of an infinitely good and gracious Being—a ray of hope comes to us. Surely He must have compassion for our weakness, and be mercifully inclined towards us, and ready to forgive.

And this is exactly what the Gospel tells us. Nevertheless, in the New Testament the forgiveness of sins is not regarded as something natural and easy of belief, but something exceptional and wonderful—something so contrary to analogy and to all our expectations that it needed a *Divine Revelation* to assure us of it, and it is in that Revelation proclaimed as 'good news' or 'the Gospel' for the human race. It is not a truth of natural, but of revealed, religion, and it needs an effort of faith to accept it. It is something so impossible in the existing order of things where the law of Karma reigns that it required a miracle of wisdom and grace to accomplish it, even the Incarnation, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. This was needed in order that the remission of sins, which in the natural order seems impossible, might be secured.[1]

It is spoken of in the New Testament as a unique supernatural act in the spiritual world, effecting some profound

[1] The reader is referred to a little book on 'The Atonement,' by Dr. Magee, late Archbishop of York. (Cassell and Co., London.)

change in the relations existing between God and man (Rom. iii. 24–26; 2 Cor. v. 19), freeing us from the dominion of sin and of the law, and bringing us under the reign of grace (Rom. vi. 14, vii. 6). And this new state into which we are brought is so wonderful that it is described as a new life—a new birth—in which we are actually united to Christ by an act of faith, sharers of His life, partakers of His Divine nature, and so becoming *new creatures* (2 Cor. v. 17).

Now, such an event and such an experience are unknown in any other religion. And strange as it may seem, true as it is, it goes sorely against the grain of human nature to renounce the boast of inherent virtue, the claim to personal merit, and to acknowledge that all our painful and protracted efforts to build up character by *ourselves alone* have been in vain. 'Eastern religions,' once said the late Sir M. Monier-Williams, Boden Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Oxford, 'are occupied with a salvation to be wrought by man. Christianity presents a salvation designed and offered by God. The Bible ever says to men: "Put off the robe of self-righteousness"; the sacred books of the East tell him to put it on, even when about to appear in the presence of God.' And yet, with all the cycles and æons of existence, have Hindūs succeeded in wearing off the fetters by which they are still bound to the misery of births and deaths? What is once done cannot be undone, they say. No, it cannot, if we are left simply to ourselves and Karma; though Mrs. Besant, aware of the objection brought against the doctrine that it teaches a fatalism destructive of human effort, affirms (in her tract on *Karma*) that by bravely and patiently bearing our Karma 'we *can* break one by one the fetters we have forged, and step out again free men into the world.'[1] But

[1] See also Bhagavad-gītā, vi. 35, 36.

can we? How many men and women have done it in their own unaided strength? The practice of *yoga* demands a set of external circumstances which can never be those of ordinary men, to say nothing of women and children. Philosophic teaching and mere knowledge are all very well, but their impotence as a moral power has in all ages been made manifest. The fetters of our sin are too strong for the generality of men; and the Hindū *will* is proverbially weak. We need a moral dynamic—a *motive power*—such as is given us in the attractive vision and converting force of Divine Forgiveness, and which we have in Christ. Then we come to 'love God, because He first loved us'; and love is a transforming energy. What is once done *cannot* be undone, if we are left alone with Karma; but it is equally true that what is once done *can* be undone, so far as the most fatal consequences of our sin are concerned, if there be a loving Father in the Divine Ruler of the universe. The first holds true when a man thinks of himself alone, and the second holds true when he loses himself in the Divine Saviour of the world. For Christ loosens the grip of sin on the heart and reinforces the will. Hindūism and Buddhism throw men on their *own* resources; the Gospel of Christ throws them on the strength of *another*. The one message breathes despondency and pessimism; the other breathes hope and optimism.

The glad tidings of the Gospel to be proclaimed to non-Christian lands—and preaching would never exist if there were not *good* news to proclaim: did one ever hear of a pessimist preaching?—the glad tidings is just this: that Christ is incarnated into the natural order and discipline we are under, and becomes the quickening life and central factor of it. So that it is not *what we do* that is the ground of our justification before God, but what Christ

does *for* us and *in* us in His atoning Death, and in the perfect righteousness which He works out in our character —the moral power of His life passing into our lives, as the sap of the tree flows into the branches.

This is the change of state that we celebrate as Christianity; and it must, of course, be experienced to be proved—a change, that is, just as great as must needs take place when the impersonal and dry machine composed of law and world has God's gracious influence and sanctifying life poured in. Acting with the universality and permanence of natural law, there is a Higher Power which makes for righteousness in the universe and in the heart of man. Righteousness is the deepest word of Grace.

Divine grace, however, does not annihilate the past, does not annul the consequences of wrong-doing; but it does this, it *brings the soul into right relations with God*, and hence gives it *a new start and direction* for the future. The conception of Divine laws as acting by way of natural consequence *in the direction oj rebuke and recovery* is engrained in all the language of promise and of blessing of which the New Testament is full. And this is an all-important part of the subject, which needs to be clearly apprehended; since it is just here where the chief difficulty comes in. If it can be shown that this conception of Divine law acting in the direction of rebuke and recovery has scientific aspect, then the objection raised by the advocates of Karma against the Christian doctrine of Forgiveness is met rationally.

There are two laws of physics with which students of science are familiar. One is, that 'action and reaction are equal, and in opposite directions.' In this analogy we have the ethical truth of retribution suggested, that men are judged according to their works. But there is

another physical law equally true, and that is, 'the *persistence* of energy with its *convertibility* into different forms,' as illustrated in the conversion of the energy of motion, by friction, into the energy of heat or of electricity. May not the application of this law in the ethical sphere be this?—The energy of past sin is *persistent*; as a cause it generates its appropriate consequence—its Karma. But Divine Forgiveness, proclaimed in the Gospel, *converts* the *destructive* power of sin into the *constructive* power of sincere repentance, just as the energy of motion is converted by friction into the energy of heat or electricity.[1]

The very remembrance of the sins that burden the conscience acts as a powerful stimulus in the struggle for amendment and reparation. Of course, where there is no remembrance of past sin, as in the re-birth theory, there can be no repentance; and so we do not find in Hindūism that deep sorrow for sin and anguish of spirit that are so characteristic of true Christian experience. The sight of a man bowed in contrition with a sense of sin, and on his knees in prayer, struggling to gain the victory over besetting evil, is foreign to Hindū ideas, but essentially Christian; it is the noble sorrow of the great saints.

There is in this expiation of a guilty conscience a process of mortification going on—which the Apostle Paul calls 'the crucifixion of the old man,' or corrupt character—and at the same time a work of renewal by the Spirit of God. And the suggested analogy is this: in this struggle for amendment we see the causative energy of past sin *persisting in the converted form* of a power to overcome evil with good—corresponding to the physical law seen in the conversion, by friction, of the energy of motion into the energy of heat or of electricity.

[1] See 'The Divine Satisfaction,' by J. M. Whiton, D.D., p. 63 *et seq.* (James Clarke and Co., London.)

This new power to overcome evil is developed in us by the Divine grace of Forgiveness; and we see the all-important place that Forgiveness holds in the Christian system. In the presence of the Cross of Christ—the symbol of God's forgiving love—and revealing as nothing else could *what sin really is to God*—is generated by a genuine repentance for our sin, a godly energy that spurs us on to do all we can to amend the wrong, and to discharge the debt of evil consequences—the Karma—which our sin entails. The objective work of Christ must be subjectively realized by the soul. Forgiveness produces personal righteousness, through our moral fellowship with Christ, and among other results creates in us a forgiving spirit towards our fellow-men.

We have an illustrious example of this transformed energy in the Apostle Paul. The remembrance of his having been a blasphemer and a persecutor was ever urging him on with a holy energy in the service of Christ. The spring of this energy was in the melting thought that he had been forgiven. There we have what this same Apostle calls 'a new creation'—another man. In his view, however ill the man who sins deserves of God, the man who has *forsaken* his sins is no longer that ill-deserving man. Why should such a one go on suffering for *separate acts* of sin when the sin itself is forsaken and forgiven. What moral end can possibly be served by that? Even the Hindū who has attained *jnāna* ceases to suffer the penalty of past wrong-doing: why, then, should he object to the remission of evil deeds in the case of the Christian *jnāni*—the man who *knows* God in the divinest way it is possible to know Him, as one who pardoneth iniquity, transgression and sin?

God regards us at any moment as what we *are*, not as what we were. The present hour is the central and

all-important point of every life; the past and the future are in the circumference. Human or natural justice, as in the doctrine of Karma, knowing only the outward man, takes hold of *deeds*, whenever done, and after however long a lapse of time. The Divine righteousness, with truer, deeper eyes that penetrate the heart, deals with *character*—with deeds, no doubt, but with deeds so far as they pass into character; and character is ever a thing of the present; and whatever our present principle of action is, that is essentially our character.

The Christian religion, therefore, while fully admitting the truth of Karma—the persistence of the past—has something *more*, and something priceless to offer, which Hindūism has not—even that Gospel truth of God's Atoning and Forgiving Grace by which the sinner, subdued and penitent, and filled with a sacred affection, is *clothed anew with moral power*, through the inspirations of the Father's love.

The Forgiveness of Sins is thus by no means the immoral act it is sometimes supposed by Hindūs to be, when it secures the highest end of moral government—a penitent thoroughly changed in heart, and reformed in life. It is not in conflict, but in keeping, with the law of judgment according to works. Forgiveness effects no cancelling of the spiritual law, that the sinful deed cannot be annulled; that the past act lives on as a persistent cause producing its effect. There is in the Christian Gospel no cut-off between causes and effects; but though the causative energy—the Karma—put in motion by a sinful deed persists, its force now appears, through forgiveness, in a converted form—transmuted from a deteriorating to an ameliorating force, from a fatal to a vital issue. The Divine way of the Gospel is to respect the facts—that past deeds are indestructible—but with

these facts *to combine a new element of its own*, whereby the evil that cannot be annihilated is buried by forgiveness, and becomes, in a genuine repentance, a source of fertilization to the new-born seeds of better resolution. This is that 'covering' of sin which the Bible speaks of as effected by Forgiveness.

And this truth, while having, as we have seen, a scientific aspect, in harmony with physical law, and therefore commendable to reason, is the sweetest, gladdest, and divinest truth, because hope-inspiring, that human ears can ever hear. It is a truth to which our conscience must respond with an embrace that grows the stronger as our vision of it becomes more clear. To be sure of a pardoned past, a peaceful present, and a triumphant future, to cut the cable that holds us to this limited earthly life, is surely better than to be bound by the fetters of a chain of repeated births and deaths. And every century is making it more and more obvious, as Mr. Balfour has shown in his great work, 'The Foundations of Belief,' that the deepest evidence of all Divine teaching is in the intimations and cravings of the ordinary human heart. These imitations and cravings are to be found in Hindūism; in that hoping in the Divine mercy as exhibited in Vishnavaism; and in those remarkable words of the Bhagavad-gītā, already quoted: 'Come to me as your sole refuge. I will release you from all sins.' Whatever a philosophical system may say to the contrary, those words express the longing of the heart, and foreshadow that truth of Divine Forgiveness and Restoration which appears in all its fulness in the Christian Gospel.

The Hindū doctrine of Karma is just such as reflective and philosophical minds, perplexed with the problems of existence, would reach, *apart from the Gospel;* and so true is it that the Christian religion, while recognising all

the truth that other systems hold in common with itself, has *something more* to give—something more that the Divine Father has revealed, as man has been able to receive it. In other departments of life we gladly welcome 'something more' if it will add to our resources and happiness. Much more should we welcome it in the highest and most important sphere of all, that of religion.

The doctrine of Karma, as was pointed out, has in Hindūism been complicated and obscured by being combined with the doctrine of transmigration, and a further consideration of its specific teaching must now occupy us.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSMIGRATION

Doctrine of Transmigration — Widespread Belief — Not taught in the Vedas—Western and Hindū Conceptions of Soul—Teaching of Manu—Underlying Truths—Future Life—Future Punishment—In a Body—Instinct of Justice—Main Arguments for Doctrine discussed—Heredity and Christian View of Suffering —Positive Objections against the Belief—At Variance with other Hindū Doctrines—Is Unscientific, Unphilosophical, Unjust, Unremediable—Practical Effects of Fatalism—the Christian Cure of Sin.

TRANSMIGRATION, or metempsychosis, according as we use a Latin or a Greek word, signifies the passing of the soul of man after death into some other earthly body. It is a very ancient and widespread belief, and has been held, though in very different forms, by some of the greatest thinkers of the world. Modern theosophists make a special point of transmigration, and have brought it into notice in the West; while in India they endeavour to prove its superiority over the Christian belief.

The time and place of the birth of the doctrine are unknown. The ancient Egyptians held it, but whether it was introduced from without or evolved from within cannot be determined. The embalming of their dead, and their careful preservation in the catacombs, were

connected with this belief. The worship of beasts by the Egyptians originated in the idea that even the souls of the gods migrated into them. In Greece and Rome the doctrine does not seem to have impressed itself upon the popular mind, and was, indeed, alien to the Greek spirit. The belief was confined to philosophers, and was first plainly taught by Pythagoras, some 500 or 600 years B.C., though whether he derived it from India, as some think, or whether he ever visited India, is very doubtful. He was followed by Plato, who in his earlier dialogues held that men at their next birth were changed into women, or birds, or beasts, or fishes, according as they had lived unrighteously, or frivolously, or without philosophy, or in extreme ignorance; and that between these successive incarnations they had to descend to the lower regions for a thousand years of expiation and purification—thus approaching very closely to the Oriental form of belief. With Plato, however, it was simply a fanciful speculation, and not, as in India, the foundation of a religious system.

The great Alexandrine Father, Origen, believed in reincarnation; but he held that with the appearance of Christ the process was suddenly arrested, and fallen angels and fallen men were alike lifted by His spirit from their degradation to their homes in heaven.

The belief has been met with all over the world: among the wild tribes of North America; in Mexico and Peru; among Finns and Lapps; among the Australian savages; and in the religion of the southern tribes of Africa. It still prevails in India, Ceylon, Burmah, Thibet, Tartary, China, that is, in all lands where Hindūism or Buddhism is professed, and is therefore accepted by a large proportion of the human race.

It is interesting to note, however, that the belief was

unknown to the ancient Āryans, who early settled in India; nor has any branch of the Āryan family in the West held it. There is a total absence of the idea of re-birth in the hymns of the Rig-veda,[1] beyond a stray reference in the tenth and last book, and of a much later date than the others, to the soul of a dead man going to the waters or plants. The conception is, indeed, foreign to Vedic modes of thought. In those early times it was believed that the souls of the good went after death to the heaven of light, where they joined the company of the fathers. The prevailing use, too, of animals in sacrifice and for human food in those early times is a presumption against the Vedic belief in transmigration; and in the view of Gough and other writers the idea was adopted by the Āryan settlers from the aborigines of the country.

The weird belief in transmigration begins to appear, though not as yet clearly defined, in the Brāhmanas,[2] or sacrificial rituals, and in connection with the growth of sacerdotalism. At this period the gods are made to declare that all who omit to sacrifice should be born again and present their bodies to Yama, the god of departed spirits — the Indian Pluto — in innumerable successive births.

The belief is fully developed in the Upanishads, which tell us that those whose conduct has been evil are born again as dog, or hog,[3] worm, insect, fish, bird, lion, boar, serpent,[4] or as rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans.[5] It underlies the systems of Hindū philosophy,

[1] The only verse ever quoted in support of the doctrine is Rig-veda i. 164, 32. But the word *bahuprajah*, which is rendered by Professor Wilson 'is subject to many births,' may, according to commentators, also mean 'has many offsprings'; and the latter is held to be the usual and more literal use of the word, the former being artificial.

[2] See the Satapatha Brāhmana.

[3] Chhāndogya-Upan., V. x. 7, 8.

[4] Kaushitaki-Upan., i. 2.

[5] Aitareya-Āranyaka, II. i. 2.

especially the Sānkhya and Vedānta; while in the Laws of Manu the doctrine is elaborately expounded, and 'what particular bodies the vital spirits enter in this world,' in consequence of sins committed, are described at large, with detailed lists of fearful penalties.[1] It is assumed, and argued on, in the Bhagavad-gītā,[2] and is taught in the Purānas. For many hundred years before Christ, down to the present day, it has dominated the thought of the people. All the gurus, pandits, Brāhmans, and other castes, believe it to be true. It enters, indeed, so vitally into the whole genius of Hindū philosophy, and is so interwoven with the incitements to an ascetic and holy life, giving rise to all the self-tortures of the devotee, that were this doctrine removed the religious structure of Hindūism would be hard to recognise, and would have to be rebuilt.

A belief is not necessarily true because it is ancient. Many old beliefs, such as that the earth was the centre of the solar system, have been shown to be false by modern science. The ancients, with their limited knowledge of the laws that govern Nature and life, postulated certain theories to account for certain facts which they could not otherwise explain; they tried to settle everything in God's great universe by subtle speculations. Transmigration may be most improbable—may be, as it is, impossible to prove; but Hindūs, because they have heard of it from their childhood, naturally believe it. It has, indeed, entered so deeply into the mental consciousness of the people that they assume it without a doubt in all their arguments, and cannot imagine a state of things in which it should not be true. Professor Macdonnell, in his recent 'History of Sanskrit Literature' (p. 387) observes: 'There is, perhaps,

[1] Institutes, xii. 503 (B. L. Dass's Popular Edition, Calcutta).

[2] See Bhagavad-gītā, ii. 13, 22; vi. 41, 42; vii. 19; ix. 21; xvi. 20.

no more remarkable fact in the history of the human mind than that this strange doctrine, never philosophically demonstrated, should have been regarded as self-evident for 2,500 years by every philosophical school or religious sect in India, excepting only the Materialists,' *i.e.*, the heretical and sceptical school of the Chārvākas. There may be momentous differences on every other matter concerning God and man and the universe; but transmigration is the one belief that possesses cardinal value, on which Hindus of every sect and every shade of opinion are agreed.

From a physiological point of view this Indian idea of successive lives—so foreign to our modes of thought—is a form of the more general primitive belief—based on the resemblances between ancestors and their descendants and between the faculties and instincts of men and of beasts—that the souls of ancestors passed into children and of men into beasts. The question is, Can it be substantiated? Is it reasonable? Or can the facts which it professes to account for be otherwise and better explained?

The philosophy of the doctrine of transmigration as it was received by Hindūs, Egyptians, Greeks, and others, appears to have been essentially the same—namely, the unity of all being; that all souls are portions or emanations of the Universal Spirit, and as such must eventually return to their source, as rivers run into the sea.

Transmigration in India thus has its roots in the Brāhmanical, theosophic, or *pantheistic* conception of God. When a single, universal, and indestructible principle of the life manifested in Nature and man is grasped, then a pantheistic theory as to God, and a theory of transmigration and absorption as to man, will emerge. If, on the other hand, a supreme will and authority are sought, then the result will be a personal God and the *personal*

continuance of man. The basis of the first is metaphysical, of the second moral.[1]

Now, the idea of *soul* is fundamentally different in the East and in the West. The religious philosophies of Europe are all founded on the principle of a self-conscious intelligence and will as their final cause and as their conception of soul, and hence it is that in all European systems of thought or religion re-incarnation and transmigration are unknown; for a self-conscious intelligence can no more be transferred at pleasure from one type of creature to another after death, so as to unite harmoniously with it, 'than a lion's head can be made to unite harmoniously with an ass's body.[2] But in Hindū philosophy, where soul is the vital principle of Nature—a purely negative principle, without thought or emotion of any kind—a vague, diffused essence which can unite with the minds or bodies of each and every species of man, animal, or plant indifferently, a scheme of transmigration is quite compatible, and is, indeed, required for logical completeness, where the great object is the union of the individual soul with the universal soul.

And here it may be observed that, when once philosophy has reached a *self-conscious* intelligence as the final cause of things—a principle drawn from what is highest in the human mind—it is not likely to be affected by any system founded on the negative and far less efficient principle of soul, which is drawn, not from what is highest in man, but from that mere vitality common alike to all the works of Nature. The conviction of *Personality*, both human and Divine, is the dividing line between the Christian and the Hindū belief; it is at the root of all the most vital

[1] See Dr. A. M. Fairbairn's 'Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History,' p. 118.

[2] See J. B. Crozier' 'History of Intellectual Development,' p. 87.

differences between the two faiths; and as a *theistic* belief preads in India, belief in transmigration will die out.

According to Hindūism, the universe is made up of innumerable souls and innumerable bodies. The souls have existed from all eternity,[1] either as separate entities or as emanations from the Supreme; they are not created. Bodies are of all kinds—divine, human, demoniac, animal, vegetable, mineral—and they are all possessed by souls. This accounts for the great regard that Hindūs cherish for all animal life: animals are tenanted by human souls. The famine in Gujerat in 1901 was said to have been largely owing to a plague of rats. The farmers said: 'These are the spirits of all our friends who died during the famine; they died of hunger; now they have returned in rats' form to eat the food due to them. How could we kill them?'

And why does a soul occupy a particular body at a given time either higher or lower in the scale of creation? Because of some act committed, good or bad, in a former birth. The kind of body that the soul inhabits, and the kind of life that it lives therein, are determined with absolute precision by the quality of the actions of all past lives.

Souls originally pure, by becoming united to matter, which in all Eastern systems is essentially evil, acquire degrees of impurity, which have to be purged away by successive transmigrations, alternated with periods of reward or punishment in graduated heavens or hells. These awards of merit or demerit contracted in a former life being exhausted, a new birth on earth, determined by the previous lives, has to take place.

According to Manu, there is a triple order of trans-

[1] See Vedānta-Sūtra., II. iii., 17; Katha-Upanishad., ii. 18; Bhagavad-gītā, ii. 19, 20.

migration—the passage of a soul through the highest, middle, and lower stages of existence—resulting from good or bad acts, or words, or thoughts, produced by the influence of the Sānkhyan trinity of *gunas*—viz., goodness, passion, and darkness. These *gunas*, or 'cords,' are the actual ingredients of which *Prakriti*—the great material producer—is constituted,[1] and they make up the whole world of sense evolved out of *Prakriti*, one or other of them being in excess in any given body. They make man divine and noble, human and selfish, bestial and ignorant, according to the predominance of goodness, passion, or darkness. The highest of the first stage of existence is Brahma himself; the lowest, either a vegetable or a mineral; other forms in an upward order being worms, insects, fishes, reptiles, snakes, tortoises, etc. For sins of act, a man takes a vegetable or mineral form; for sins of word, the form of a bird or a beast; for sins of thought, that of a man of the lowest caste. A triple self-control in thought, word, and deed leads to emancipation from all births and final beatitude.[2]

'The slayer of a Brāhman must enter, according to the circumstances of his crime, the body of a dog, a boar, an

[1] See also Bhagavad-gitā, xiv. 5–25.

[2] Sir M. Monier-Williams has pointed out ('Indian Wisdom,' p. 336) that we see the working of the Hindū idea of transmigration in the ten incarnations of Vishnu. In the first three Vishnu is represented as being present in the bodies of animals; in the fourth, as taking the form of half a lion and half a man—a transition to that of the complete man. Here again the divine essence commences with the smallest type of humanity—a dwarf; and then it rises to mighty heroes.

It has been conjectured that the notion of imparting instruction by means of *fables*, in which animals figure as the speakers, first suggested itself to Hindū moralists when the doctrine of transmigration had taken firm root in India—that is, with the growth of Brāhmanism in Manu's time.

ass, a camel, a bull, a goat, a sheep, a stag, a bird, a *Chandāla* or a *Pukkasa*.' 'If a man steal grain in the husk he shall be born a rat; if honey, a great stinging gnat; if milk, a crow; if woven flax, a frog; if a cow, a lizard; if a horse, a tiger; if roots or fruit, an ape; if a woman, a bear.' [1] Manu elsewhere speaks of 'the gliding of the soul through ten thousand millions of wombs.' [2] The world, according to the Hindū conception, which largely corresponds with Plato's, is thus peopled with countless bodies, the temporary abodes of fallen human souls, all expiating their sins in these rounds of unceasing transmigration.

How, now, is *deliverance* to come? As we saw in the last chapter, the bondage is due to works, good or bad, and ignorance of the true nature of the soul. When a birth is taken action of some kind begins. And virtue and vice, the result of action, create merit and demerit; the one needs to be rewarded, and the other punished; so that new virtues as well as new vices only *prolong* the miserable cycle of births and deaths. Birth is thus not a blessing, but the penalty of previous sin. The aim of the soul should therefore be to snap the chain by getting rid of works altogether, by eradicating the desires; and then, when there is no longer the ripening of actions (*karma*) into merit or demerit, and when, by knowledge (*jnāna*), the identity of the human and the Divine spirit is realized, the soul, purified and liberated, is fit to join the universal soul. Final beatitude—the grand problem of all the systems—is then attained, though only by the elect few, and this beatitude is loss of personality—a cessation of self-conscious being. This is the only salvation believed in or desired—salvation, not from the burden of sin, but from the burden of existence.

[1] Institutes of Manu, xii. 55–67. [2] *Ibid.*, vi. 63.

Buddhism does not teach the transmigration of *souls* as such, for Buddha, as we have seen, was led to repudiate the doctrine of soul altogether, and to explain the problem of the world by his doctrine of *karma*—the survival of effects—or *character*. Buddhism, opposed to Hindūism, is thus materialistic; and since the effects of a man's deeds in a given life will not be experienced by the man himself, but by some other being, its system is characterized by gross injustice.

In the Hindū belief, on the other hand, there are certain *underlying truths* whose value no Christian can fail to recognise. And there can be little doubt that it has been these truths, mixed though they have been with much error, which have given vitality and continuance to the doctrine through so many centuries. Every error will live as long, and only as long, as its share of truth remains unrecognised; and while Christianity recognises all the truths that other faiths contain, it adds others which they do not possess.

The belief witnesses, for example, to the *continued existence of the soul in a future life;* to the reality and relative independence of finite spirits across the waves of change; to the conservation of moral energy. In theory it is spiritualistic, and hence on a distinctly higher level than that of Buddhism. One who believes that he is so far independent of his body, that he once inhabited other bodies, and will hereafter inhabit still others, will scarcely regard the spirit as a mere function of matter. And yet, as it has been well pointed out,[1] owing to the false conception of the relation between soul and body, the actual working out of the system is largely materialistic. 'If the soul of a man and that of a spider can exchange tenements with no

[1] In a lecture by the Rev. W. Hooper, D.D. See 'Bombay Decennial Conference Report,' pp. 92, 93.

more inconvenience than might be involved in two people exchanging houses, then it is plain that bodies bear no necessary, or even natural, relation to the souls that occupy them.' Nothing is really human or animal except the body in each case. Duty, virtue, intellect, together with the merit and demerit which the soul is supposed to carry with it, become essentially material qualities, since they are the result, not of the soul's activity, but of the influence upon it of the particular body inhabited for the time being. In Christian philosophy the soul is the 'Ego,' and each soul finds its expression in the outward body that relates it to the present life of discipline and education, and any exchange of one body or expression for another would be impossible, since it would mean the confusion and destruction of personal identity.

Another important truth witnessed to is the sense of sin, and that *sin is inevitably followed by suffering;* that demerit must receive its penalty.

Further, the soul receives the due reward of its deeds *in a body*, hereby resembling Christian belief, and sharply contrasted with the idea of the ghostly spectres of Greek philosophy. The Christian, however, concerned with character rather than with merit, and believing more consistently than the Hindū in the endless progress of the soul, looks for a *spiritualized* or psychical body as its future home; one more fitted, and not less fitted, for the soul's development than the present body, whose sphere of exercise will not be this lower, earthly world, with the same round of evils and temptations, but another and a higher sphere where the soul and its faculties may expand, until it finally reaches perfection. We thus see that one favourite argument for the re-birth theory—namely, that one brief life of a few years, which is all that Christianity gives man, is too short an educational course, and that a succession of

births represents an ascending scale of development for the soul—is invalid, since Christianity postulates another and a higher sphere of existence, where, not in another corporeal body which has no relation to the previous body, but in its own psychical or spiritual vehicle, the soul shall gather strength and purity and press forward to perfection.

Once more, the doctrine of transmigration undoubtedly offers a strong *support to that instinct of justice* which is innate in human nature, and to that retributive power of action which we have seen at work in the doctrine of Karma.

And this brings us to the positive arguments commonly adduced for transmigration.

It is said that only by this doctrine can we satisfactorily account for the present mixture of good and evil among men, and for the inequalities in the distribution of happiness and misery in the present life, and that unless we suppose former stages of either virtuous or vicious existence, partiality and injustice must be ascribed to God. This is a problem that would seem to have weighed with peculiar heaviness on the Indian mind, as it realized all too keenly the sharp social contrasts that had been accentuated by the tyranny of caste.

But the inequalities of condition around us are not as great as they seem. Happiness is the supreme thing that men desire; and wealth and high position do not always bring pleasure and peace, neither do poverty and sickness always make men sad. God is not unjust in setting one thing over against another, as when we see the poor peasant contented, and the wealthy monarch miserable.

Then, again, happiness and misery are very largely the result of our own character and conduct, here and now. The idle, the imprudent, the intemperate, live in poverty and suffering; while the industrious and the virtuous, as a rule, enjoy prosperity and happiness. For happiness is not

in *outward* surroundings; it is the possession of a good and tranquil heart. In being *what he is*, whether good or bad, every man has his reward. The reward is spiritual. An act of love will make the soul more loving; an act of dishonesty or impurity will make the soul more base. The real differences between men are in the men themselves, not in their fortunes. The good of being good is in being good, not in outward success; the evil of being evil is in being evil, no matter whether a man be living in a palace and faring sumptuously every day. For we must not suppose that a wicked man, living in prosperity, is escaping justice. Justice is at work within, in the decay of character. A bad man, who is dead to goodness, loses the truest joy and wealth of life, even though he be unconscious of the loss, and though to all appearance he be a prosperous man. To be insensible of sin, to be morally degraded and not to know the degradation, is the greatest calamity that can befall a man—far greater than any mere physical deformity or loss. And this work of moral degradation—the destruction of virtue, a deepening depravity and decay, the ruin of the soul—is ever going on in the wicked man, and, if unarrested, will be consummated in the life to come.

Further, the conditions of life depend very much on the *conduct of others*. If a man does good, others will be benefited; if evil, others will suffer. A vicious man, for example, sets fire to a shop; a whole bazaar is burnt down. Why do so many suffer? Not because they are in fault, not because God is partial, but because they happened to live near one another. If all men were good and honest, and just in their dealings with others, there would be far less misery in the world. By removing the evils that men inflict on one another, one reason assigned for the belief in transmigration would disappear.

Viewing the world, then, as a school of discipline for the

formation of character, rather than as a place of judgment, we have not to go back to former births to explain the differences of happiness and condition. God apportions to each man his particular employment and responsibilities, and knows well the kind of training that each requires. One man's character may require an experience of poverty and pain, another man's the test of prosperity.

But there is another and a stronger argument advanced in favour of transmigration, namely, the *inequalities of birth.* Why is one man *born* rich and another poor, one man born a king and another a peasant, one a genius and another an idiot, one in the full possession of all his senses, powers and limbs, and another bereft of them—a cripple, or blind, or leprous? Why does one soul see light in the Australian Bush, while another is ushered into all the civilization of the West? In the same family, why is one child born in robust health, while another is a sufferer all his days? Such cases undoubtedly present the greatest difficulty; for persons born with such defects cannot be charged with any fault or folly of their own, except on the hypothesis of a former birth. And how do we explain the reason of the environments into which we are born? Are they determined by mere accident, or is it not rather that as our past has been so we find our present?

Now, there is a modern scientific doctrine that throws a flood of light upon this mystery, and offers a satisfactory explanation of much in the ancient problem that gave rise to transmigration—the doctrine of *heredity.* And here we have demonstrated proof in the place of mere conjecture. The hypothesis of transmigration was invented in an age ignorant of modern science. Like the dogma of the eternity of souls, it is not a universal and necessary truth, which, like ultimate scientific and mathematical ideas, or like the idea of God, rests on universal consent, and cannot

possibly be shaken. It does not, like all true knowledge, become equally certain to other minds, and so capable of standing the test of the common reason of humanity. These old dogmas are merely the conventions, assumptions, and opinions of a particular class of people, who have lived for ages imprisoned within their own area, and cut off from the higher scientific evolution of Europe. The nations of the highest civilization, who are now achieving most for the world, do not believe in them.

The law of heredity, on the other hand, one of the most valuable possessions of modern psychology, is not doubted by any careful student of human nature or biology. As far back as the dawn of history it has been recognised as one of the most potent forces in the development of life. And the Bible states that the consequences of sin run through three and four generations, while the results of righteousness may endure to a thousand. Heredity thus works for the regeneration as well as for the degeneration of the world. The continuity and solidarity of the race is a terrible reality. We who live now are products of the past. We are what our ancestors have made us. Not our own virtues and vices contracted in some former birth, but the virtues and vices of those who have lived before us, reach our time; and moral and intellectual qualities, virtues, and vicious habits, and certain diseases, are all in the stream of heritage which flows from the distant past.

'Heredity,' says Ribot, 'is that biological law by which all beings endowed with life tend to repeat themselves in their descendants; it is for the species what personal identity is for the individual.' By this law 'the individual receives from his parents by birth his chief vital forces and tendencies, his physical and spiritual capital'; while environment—another no less important law—'consists of all the events and conditions surrounding him afterwards

that modify his nature and change the tendency of his life.'[1]

There is certainly a strong analogy between heredity and *karma*, though it is not complete. Heredity, *e.g.*, operates only within the *same* species. Karma, on the other hand, operates through *all* species of animated being. And yet, since the person who originally started my chain of karma was no more my present self than my grandfather was—the *nexus* that links successive births being, not a continuous personality, but only some physical chain—the law of Karma may be regarded as the law of heredity in a different form.

A child is born, and resembles one or both of his parents. But—according to the latest theory of heredity, which is founded on the 'continuity of the germ-plasm,' which passes over from one generation to another—since each new germ grows out of the united germ-plasms of two parents, there arises a mingling of their characters in the offspring. And hence every individual is a complex result, reproducing in ever-varying degrees the diverse characteristics of his two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, and other more remote ancestors.[2] Family likeness, personal or mental idiosyncrasies, traits of genius, moral habits, together with predisposition to diseases or crime, are transmitted and reproduced. All that distinguishes species as species is invariably inherited. 'Like produces like.'

But the most striking examples of heredity would seem to be in the line of evil—along that particular line which transmigration for the most part takes—and probably because a process of decay is always more rapid than a

[1] 'Heredity and Christian Problems,' by Amory H. Bradford, p. 2. Macmillan & Co.)

[2] See 'Darwinism,' by A. R. Wallace, p. 439. (Macmillan & Co.)

process of growth. The law is abundantly manifested in the transmission of qualities that lead to vice, pauperism, and crime. Diseases run in families. One family may be liable to consumption, another to rheumatism, another to insanity; while such evils as scrofula and syphilis may reappear in successive generations. It has been stated that one-half of the cases of insanity among the higher classes in France, and about one-third among the lower classes, have been inherited from parents or ancestors.

Leprosy is reckoned one of the remote forms of the diseases that spring from impure and improper connections. The same kind of reason is true of idiocy and of deaf and dumb children. In Hindūism these terrible afflictions are regarded as the consequences of great sins in former births. Medical men, however, find little difficulty in tracing all peculiarities of bodily health and soundness, or the reverse, to nearer or more remote causes of constitutional disease.

The class known as 'instinctive criminals' is composed of persons who take to anti-social ways by instinct of nature, who lie, and cheat, and steal, and murder. They are driven to such courses by an instinct born in them. To this class, it is said, belong fully two-thirds of our whole criminal population, and a still larger proportion of prostitutes and habitual drunkards.

The criminal is very closely related to the insane, and, personally, often resembles the idiot. If we enquire into the family history of these criminals, we find a most intimate relation existing between the instinctive criminal and other degenerate conditions, as epilepsy, insanity, and drunkenness. All these states are met with in the parents and brothers and sisters of criminals, and so generally as to prove beyond all possibility of doubt that the moral decay, of which instinctive crime is the outcome, is but one of the many forms in which family degeneration shows itself. In

the majority of cases crime appears in one or two or three members of the family, the brothers and sisters showing the taint in various other ways. One will be scrofulous or a deaf-mute, another idiotic or epileptic, a prostitute, or an habitual drunkard, as the case may be.

But, happily, there is a beneficent and gracious, as well as a stern and dark, side to this law of heredity. He who forms his own character on a high moral level is helping to form the character of subsequent generations. We may bequeath a heritage of blessing, as well as a heritage of woe, to our posterity. We are not shut up along our narrow line of karmic forces, which are concentrated and spent on self alone; but a vast vision of possibilities opens before us, and by our faithfulness to conscience and to moral law we may be distinct helps in the upward life to individuals and families yet unborn.

Nor must we overlook the correlative law of 'environment.' By the overruling of a merciful Providence—which, in the midst of natural law, always 'makes for righteousness'—heredity may be largely modified by environment; otherwise the vicious would reproduce the vicious to the end of time, and there would be no redemption. Improved circumstances and pure and healthy surroundings result in a corresponding elevation of character and life; and, happily, by reason of our Divine origin, there is always something in human nature which responds to education and religion. Thus, redemptive processes may set in from our very birth; and by human sympathy and help, and still more by Divine grace, we may, if honest, resolute, persistent, and prayerful, escape from the despotism of the past, and even 'checkmate our ancestry.'

The action of these laws, then, is demonstrated beyond any possibility of doubt. If it be said, as it has been by

Hindūs, that heredity is a law of the physical and mental organism only, and does not touch the soul—'the psychic or atomic qualities'—the reply is that there is such a mutual relation between the moral and spiritual nature and the present body, that the same law must intimately concern the higher part of our nature, and cannot be excluded from any scheme of spiritual philosophy. Moreover, the very inequalities of birth that are made so much of, and that manifest themselves in *physical* deformities and defects, as well as in diverse mental powers, are themselves cited as the prime argument for a previous existence of the soul, and for such action of the soul as to merit the particular penalty or reward, thereby affirming the intimate relation between the soul and its embodiment.

The connection here, however, is not at all apparent; for mere physical suffering and calamities—such as being born a leper, or lame, or poor—cannot, in the nature of things, be regarded as equivalents for *spiritual* punishment, being of a totally different character. To suppose such a sequence is to confuse two utterly distinct conditions. No such confusion as this is tolerated in science; and it strikes one that the Brāhman caste of India, the purity of its blood, and its intellectual superiority, are better explained by the hereditary transmission of qualities than on the assumption that Brāhmans were all remarkably virtuous in former births.

Why resort to unproved hypotheses when differences of birth and condition and other difficulties can be satisfactorily explained by scientific facts? Science is a realm of light; the dogma of transmigration grew up in an age of priestly tyranny and darkness. 'Sacerdotalism,' says Principal Fairbairn, 'could not allow those who had despised its authority to pass for ever out of its power; and transmigration did for the Eastern priesthood what purgatory did

for the Western:'[1] it strengthened the authority of priestcraft by means of terror. The doctrine had its roots, as we have seen, in the Brāhmanical conception of God; for a crude pantheism, which sees but one Divine essence in animals and men, always involves transmigration; but while the Brāhmans made the theosophic theory of emanation the basis of their claims, the sanctions which enforced them were drawn from the migrations of the soul before it could attain union with Brahma.

'Absorption was the prize of the elect few, transmigration the doom of the many.' Only the selected Brāhmans attained the first; almost the whole world revolved in the dreary circle of the second.[2] And it was this part of the Brāhmanical faith—that which intensified the actual miseries of the present and the possible miseries of the future—which became so real and terrible to the people generally. A debased priestcraft, the curse of all religions—in distinction from the 'holy priesthood of the New Testament'—makes religion a calamity. It is founded on dogmas which, like that of transmigration, create despair.

There is another aspect of modern thought which has also cast a flood of light on the ancient problem of life that gave rise to the notion of transmigration; and for this we are indebted to the Bible, and especially to the *Christian view of suffering*. The religion of Christ has given the latest answers to the earliest questions.

A great revolution was introduced into the religious world by the teaching and the sufferings of Christ. The thought, even in pious minds, had previously been: Let the wicked suffer in this world, and let the *righteous* prosper and rejoice. That was the common conception in the time of

[1] 'Studies in the Philosophy of History and Religion,' p. 140.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Job, and that is the thought, erroneous as Christians regard it, which underlies the Hindū doctrine of Karma. Because there is sin in the world, there must be suffering—that is perfectly true; but because there is suffering, Hindū philosophy concludes, with the ancients in Job's time, that there must have been sin—a totally different supposition.

And the supreme value of the Book of Job is that it gives a new idea of God, and a new conception of suffering, which became fully revealed in the life and teaching of Christ. The calamities that so perplex us, the sufferings that have worked so many sorrows, are not necessarily penalties, neither are they accidents; there is a Divine purpose in them. What was confusion to Job is order to God. Man's suffering has a place in God's plan; it means that God is seeking man's good. The blameless man who suffers is a man whom God is using for the conquest of evil, which can only be overcome through painful obedience. If God permits evil to come to a good man—in the only form in which it can come to him, as calamity, loss, disease, suffering—He does so in order that He may make it a condition and a means of higher good, alike to the man himself and to others. If the good suffer, it is that they may be tried and tested; and the tried are the purified, and the moral helpers of the world.

God is a Redeemer; man is to be redeemed; and redemption is a progressive work, begun here, but stretching away into another world, and perfected under nobler conditions than are here possible. This is the only conception of God which has hope for the universe. We are not in the hands of impersonal and inexorable law, but in the keeping of a living, loving God; and with this thought, man need never despair. Faith in such a God, and in the moral good for which He works, inspires man with courage, patience, and moral purpose; it helps him to feel that 'life

is all the nobler for being a battle against evil, all the worthier to be lived that its Maker has designed that it should at once educate and redeem through suffering.'[1]

And this view of suffering becomes confirmed and glorified in the life and work of Christ. Christ was the greatest sufferer our world has seen; yet He knew no sin, and in the midst of all His suffering He was happy and serene. Why? Because He accepted to the full the Divine function and work of suffering. His sufferings cannot be explained on any theory of transmigration; only on the theory that through suffering God works out the redemption of the world. 'Though He was a son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the author of eternal salvation' (Heb. v. 8, 9, R.V.).

Thus we see that, while the law of heredity clearly shows that we suffer, not because of sins we have committed in a former birth, but because there is such a thing as sin in the world, and because of the wrong-doing of others who have preceded us in the past, this casts no reflection on the Author of our being, when we observe that He uses this very suffering as the instrument of our highest good, as a means by which we shall be delivered from all evil, and evil itself be at length banished from the universe.

But the transmigration of the soul is beset by certain distinct and positive difficulties; and the following objections may be urged against the belief.

In the first place, the doctrine seems to be *at variance with other Hindū doctrines*, based on quite different theories of the world and life.[2]

[1] See Principal Fairbairn's 'City of God,' p. 186.

[2] This has been pointed out by Dr. W. Hooper in his lecture as above.

It is difficult to *reconcile it with Hindū Vedāntism.* If the individual soul is really identical with the one Supreme Soul, and its *apparent distinction* from it and from other souls is only the result of Māyā or Illusion, then transmigration itself is all an illusion; and 'where remains the advantage of contending for the belief that each separate soul pursues its own way through countless bodies, meeting in every one with the exact reward of its own works and no others, when all souls are really but *one* with one another and with Brahma?' It may be added too, as Kapila pointed out, that, if all souls are absolutely one, each person would be the same in his mental and moral state; all actions would be alike; oneness of soul would produce a uniformity of birth conditions.

Further, can transmigration and *the eternity of souls* both be true? Transmigration presupposes a chain of countless links, the links being connected with one another as action and the fruit of action, cause and effect. But such a chain cannot, in the nature of things, be endless, as we saw in the last chapter (p. 199). And human souls, whose reason for existence is action and the fruit of actions, cannot be eternal. If the law of Karma is said to be as eternal as God, then the primal injustice must be imputed to the Divine Being.

Again, is it not opposed to the *worship of ancestors* and to *funeral ceremonies?* The two proceed on opposite theories of life. The Vedas represent the spirits of the departed—the Pitris—not as transmigrating, but as dwelling with Yama, the King of Hades; and these ancestors disappear in transmigration. How can the Hindū widow hope by *Sati* to rejoin her husband; for where is he? And where is the necessity of performing the funeral rites, if the body which a man last inhabited is a matter of far greater concern than the existence of his father? Yet in such ancient writing as the

Aitareya-Brāhmana of the Rig-veda occurs the line, in the story of Sunahsepa: 'A father by his son clears off a debt'; that is, a man is in debt to his ancestor till he has a son, because the dead depend for happiness on the ceremonies performed by sons. And this view of the future life is everywhere presupposed by orthodox Indian life and Indian law. Inheritance, according to the Hindū belief, is not a handing on of property, but a handing on of a sacred obligation to perform religious rites for departed ancestors, the prosperity being merely the means by which this obligation is to be fulfilled. But if every soul must bear the consequences of the good or evil forces set in motion by the soul itself, how can any *srāddha* ceremonies arrest the ripening of acts *(karma-vipāka)*, or what right have we to try to interfere with the processes of justice? The doctrine of the srāddha cannot be reconciled with the belief in transmigration.

Neither is it consistent with the Hindū belief in Divine *mercy*. As has already been shown, there is no place for mercy in a scheme of natural and impersonal law. Justice alone, stern and inflexible, must reign there. This is what philosophy discerns, but the *heart* of Hindūism rebels; though, unlike the scheme of the Christian Gospel, which shows us one Divine Lord of mercy dispensing free grace to all without distinction, Hindūism in its polytheistic system postulates numberless independent ones, and seeks to escape by mere favour or luck from the action of righteous law.

Transmigration is *unscientific;* it offers violence to the known constitution of things. To suppose that the souls of intelligent and moral beings can inhabit animals, vegetables, and even rocks, that they can exchange tenements as easily as persons change houses, is opposed to all that science teaches. The human soul, with its

intellectual and moral perceptions, its sense of responsibility and duty, its faculty for Divine worship, differentiates a human being from all other creatures and things in the world. Man's body, again, is exactly suited to his soul, while the bodies of animals are as exactly suited to their several instincts and habits. Perfectly distinct classes of things and beings thus exist in the world—organic and inorganic—and all the organic beings—all animals and plants—reproduce their own kind exactly, in which all the special characters of the class reappear. The wisdom of the elephant, the fierceness of the tiger, the reason and the speech of man, are reproduced from age to age. But transmigration confuses all this beautiful order. Scientists tell us that Nature always keeps in view a certain definite type or ideal standard, to which, amidst innumerable modifications, each organized fabric always shows a decided tendency to conform. 'For such a fabric to be tenanted by a miscreant human spirit were to disturb its integrity, to destroy its proper character. It would lose its place in the classifications of science; it would constitute an anomaly to the known order of things. The supposition that the human soul may occupy such a dwelling-place without affecting its movements and interrupting its functions, without displaying itself, is inconceivable.'[1] And there is no sign among the lower animals of the existence of any *suffering* soul—any soul undergoing penalty; as a matter of fact, the animal creation leads a happier existence than man, an existence free from care, anxiety, and trouble. Anatomists have never yet detected a single trace in a lower animal of the superaddition of a rational human soul; and the notion that it can be transmuted into the proper nature of any inferior creature is a mere assumption, falsified by the phenomena

[1] See Griffith's 'Essay on the Bhagavad-gītā,' p. lii.

and laws of vegetable and animal reproduction. Nature, interpreted by science, is against it.

Transmigration is at variance with *the universal law of development.* By an instinctive effort of Nature everything tends to advance itself; the march of Nature is progressive, not self-revolving. The science of geology shows without a doubt that there has been an ascending order of life, with no break in the vast chain of development. Nature never halts; retrogression she resists. And so with man's moral and spiritual being. God intends it ever to pass on to a more complete and finished condition. But transmigration makes man an exception in the universe; it arrests him in his upward struggles. When he is maturing, and ought to take another and higher step in the scale of being, he is rudely thrust back to atone for some demerit contracted in a former birth and degraded to a brute, or a worm, or a pumpkin, despoiled of all that is noble, and hopeful, and Divine in him. And why is this? Because the outward condition of the soul is in each new birth determined by *each action in succession* in a previous birth, and not by the balance struck. That is the most striking feature of the doctrine of *karma.* 'A good man,' says Rhys Davids,[1] 'who has once uttered a slander, may spend a hundred thousand years as a god in consequence of his goodness, and when the power of his good actions is exhausted, may be born as a dumb man on account of his transgression.' The application of the doctrine is as minute as it is wide. It is related by Burnouf that a son of King Asoka was in a previous life a huntsman; and he once put out the eyes of five hundred gazelles. For that action he suffered the pains of hell for many hundred thousand years; and thereafter had *his* eyes put out five hundred times in as many

[1] The Hibbert Lectures, 1881, p. 84.

human lives.[1] Karmic justice, knowing only the outward man, takes hold of *every single deed*, whenever done; and so disturbs and puts back what may be a growing character.

The doctrine is *unphilosophical.* The human soul stores up its knowledge in memory; it never loses an atom of the information which it has once acquired.[2] In old age we recall the scenes and incidents of our youth, and sometimes, when they seem to have been quite forgotten, in an illness, in delirium, the past wonderfully reappears. Now, all the items of knowledge thus thrown up are related to the *one single life in this world* of which we are conscious. How is it that the soul, having such marvellous powers of recollection, never remembers anything of former births?

It is true that this difficulty is evaded by the Hindū systems maintaining that at each death the soul is *divested* of mind (*manas*), understanding, and consciousness. Memory and consciousness of personal identity do not go over into the life after death. But this assumption only increases the philosophical confusion. The soul exhibits such a unity of constitution that, if any part or faculty is taken away, such as memory or perception, it is not the same being, it ceases to be the *same* soul, as Kapila, the reputed founder of the Sānkhya school, says it is through all its migrations.

Moreover, supposing that at death the soul is deprived of its faculties, on its re-birth into the world it is again invested with them, and becomes once more the perfect human soul. Then, with memory complete and sound, how is it that it does not remember its former births?

The ancient rishis, it is said, did possess this power of recollection, but this is a mere assertion; and even if

[1] Introduction to the 'History of Indian Buddhism,' pp. 360–370.

[2] See Dr. Mullens' 'Religious Aspects of Hindu Philosophy, 381.

it were possible for the practice of *yoga* to produce such power, the fact remains that no one in the present day, however pious and abstracted, pretends to have any remembrance of any previous existence; and this, in the absence of any positive proof that might establish it, is sufficient for its rejection.

Hence it follows that the system of transmigration is *unjust*. If the past is all forgotten, we can know nothing of our former virtues or former faults. If we should be told of them, we should not connect them with ourselves; they would seem to us as the actions of other persons. Is such a man the same being that he was? He is practically another man. And so, if he has committed faults in a former birth, and has to suffer for them now, where is the morality of such punishment if he cannot connect those faults with himself? He cannot remember what he did nor why he is punished, a state of things which utterly destroys the foundations of moral government. Who would ever think of punishing a child for faults committed years ago, and which are quite forgotten? The theory of transmigration, framed to provide against an apparent injustice in the unequal distribution of happiness and misery, thus involves a real injustice.

The system is consequently *non-remedial;* it fails to effect the intended benefit. The object is the punishment of sin and the progressive improvement of the soul. But if a person has no memory of the past, and therefore cannot say, 'I committed that crime,' if all connection between the deed and its consequence is cut off, he can make no confession, he cannot be urged to penitence, because he can feel no guilt. How, then, can the moral character of the criminal be improved? And can any one be improved by being sent back to the very world where he became impure, amid old

temptations, and in the midst of the scenes of sin, with sinful tendencies unchanged, and without a word of instruction and warning derived from his previous history? Can this be wise, can it possibly be a successful plan? Still less can an impure nature be drawn from its impurity by being made to inhabit a cow, a boar, or a centipede. The souls thus doomed must become like the filthy beasts they are compelled to inhabit, and cannot pass from thence to the path of wisdom. On the contrary, if any light can be thrown at all on the unnatural subject by the cases of demoniac possession recorded in the Gospels, the evil spirits impel those into whom, for the time being, they migrate to self-destruction.[1] The soul is debased, denaturalized. The attempt to raise the brutes to the level of man results in the degrading man to the level of brutes. Bad as he was before, he loses every trace of excellence, and is placed beyond the reach of sympathy and redemption.

And must not *positive moral harm* be done when people are made to believe in the existence of sin when there is no conscience of sin? If a man cannot reproach himself with any former sin, his conscience is unaffected; conscience cannot work where there is no memory. And if conscience be dead with regard to past sin, which one cannot call to mind, while yet a fictitious existence is given to the sin, conscience will also be dead to the actual sins of the present—sins which we can and must attribute to ourselves. And this is probably the baneful cause of the fact that the Hindū conscience is so difficult to arouse. Conscience, paralyzed by a false belief, fails to do its proper work. Hence the belief is immoral, and exercises a disastrous and deadening influence upon character and life.

[1] See St. Mark's Gospel, chap. v.

Calamity befalls a Hindū; perhaps he is really suffering the consequence of some misdeed, or he is in a condition from which he *ought* to extricate himself. What is his own view of the situation? He does not condemn himself at all; fate is against him; it is written on his forehead; the effect of some unknown deed is inevitable; he is not free to alter it; he is destined to it; he must therefore passively submit. Where there is no conviction of sin, and, consequently, no moral blame, there will be no sense of responsibility, no belief in freedom, in the power of the will to do. The moral dynamic will be wanting. An erroneous belief of this kind, while it may explain that spirit of contentment and submission which is one of the strongest traits of the Hindū character and one of its greatest charms, thus engenders apathy and unconcern; it deprives a man of the sense of present duty, and robs him of the power to struggle energetically with difficulties and misfortunes, so as to overcome them—a distinctive feature of the West. It acts as a barrier to the alleviation of human maladies, and to the removal of social evils; it is inimical to sanitary science and to national progress. There are some 200,000 deaf-mutes in India, of which 24,520 are to be found in the Madras Presidency; and there are in the country only three small schools for this afflicted class; one at Bombay, another in Calcutta, and the third at Palamcotta, the noble enterprise of Miss Swainson. Orthodox Hindūs have strong religious prejudices against educating the deaf and dumb; they consider these afflictions a Divine dispensation with which they have no right to interfere.

So is it with poor lepers, of whom there are another 200,000 sufferers in British India. And their religion teaches them that their sufferings are due to great sins

committed in a former birth; and therefore they must perform certain ceremonies by way of atonement; and not be interfered with by Government, and put into segregation hospitals which would be jails.

In the same way vaccination is resented. Any attempt to check the ravages of small-pox which does not take the form of an offering to the goddess Kāli—the tutelar deity of the disease—is opposed to the popular religion. If Kāli claims a victim, she must have that victim, or remain unappeased.

Under the influence of this same fatalistic belief, a criminal has no encouragement to amend his ways; and when sentence is passed upon his misdeeds, he regards it as predestined. There is a story told of a Buddhist carter in Ceylon, who when condemned to death for a crime, told the Judge that he did not mind, as his turn would come, since the Judge himself would be re-incarnated in the form of a bullock, whom he, the cattle-driver, at some future time, would send over the highest precipice in Ceylon!

The world to the average Hindū is a huge lottery, in which both the prizes and the blanks have been drawn long before he was born; and he must merely be the passive recipient of whatever has been allotted him. The consciousness of independent personality does not exist; and this is the root of the most serious defects of the Hindū character. The spring of life has disappeared.

Terrible famine and pestilence have in recent years overspread India. Why were the people so apathetic and unconcerned? Why is it so difficult at such times to rouse them to a sense of duty, and get them to grapple manfully with the misfortune? Because such calamity is regarded as their fate. The energy of the West and the fatalism of the East are strikingly contrasted in our Indian

Empire: and we see how a superstitious belief acts as a barrier to the alleviation of human ills, stands in the way of health and happiness, and a right discharge of the ordinary responsibilities of life.

The system has now been going on for thousands of years: has the Hindū nation become better age after age? Its own Sāstras say, No. The *first* age was the age of truth, the *Krita* age; the present is the *Kali Yuga*, the age of ignorance, folly, and sin, one 'period' of which, it is said, is now drawing to a close. It is the universal lamentation of Hindū reformers that the nation has degenerated. And any improvement that is taking place at the present time is due, not to the belief in transmigration, but to foreign influences that are indirectly destructive to it.

And *what kind of conduct* does the belief induce towards others in sorrow, or what *consolation* can it afford in times of trouble? There is not much comfort in the thought that the suffering is inevitable, that it is common to all, the working out of natural law. When sickness and bereavement come, what hope can be administered by a faith that drives one to despair? Of hope, in the Christian sense, in view of death and the future life, there is absolutely none. It would be a cruel mockery to try to comfort one by some bright vision shortly to dawn upon the soul. The dying man must simply proceed on his unknown journey into the dark beyond, and what will befall him next he cannot know.

And what of the tears and miseries of a large number of the twenty-one millions of Indian *widows*, and the degrading sins to which many of them are driven, arising from their being taught to regard themselves as the cause of their bereavement through sins committed in a former life? This charge alone is enough to set the doctrine in

its true and ghastly light, in the view of all right-feeling and reflecting people.

How different the doctrine of the Divine mercy as taught in the Gospels, and in the light of a Divine Fatherhood! The sweetest, strongest note of the Gospel is its promise of a cancelled past through atoning Love, by which the claims of justice and of mercy are alone and for ever reconciled; and it has in addition such moral power that, whenever truly accepted, it proves a sure and complete remedy for sin. It insures sincere repentance, as we have already seen; effects the regeneration of our nature, and removes sin's moral consequences.

Thus, the hypothetical and terrifying system is *unnecessary*. It may give place to a more humane and moral one. The chief difficulty which it seeks to explain, namely, the inequalities of birth, is largely accounted for by the facts of heredity; and as for moral improvement and spiritual purification, God has, in the present constitution of things, provided a better way. Moral correction is to be derived from moral agencies, among which the very suffering that is such a mystery to non-Christian minds plays a distinguished part. The cure for the soul's evils must come from spiritual treatment. Error is to be corrected by truth; defilement by the rise of virtuous energy; defects of character and conduct by the exhibition of a moral Ideal, and by the communication of Divine power to conform thereto. Not by being born again into the same sinful world, but by being born anew, here and now, through the Divine Spirit, does the soul rise to a higher, purer life. Not by being united to a lower animal, but by being united to a Higher Nature, do we learn to forsake the ways of sin. God has revealed Himself in Christ as the present Saviour from

the dominion of evil; and in Him we may realize at once, with no dread of unknown future births, free forgiveness for all the past, the great liberation from all bondage of corruption, and—what is the *summum bonum* of Hindū thought and endeavour, though with a large addition—*conscious* and eternal union with God Himself.

CHAPTER XIV

HINDU ASCETICISM

The Highest Saintliness — Texts quoted — A Modern Ascetic — Criticism of Yoga Exercises—Their Immoral Results—'Not to be'—Christian Correspondences and Contrasts — The Contemplative Life — Prayerless and Self-seeking System — Hindū and German Pessimism—Brahmist Estimate of the Vedānta—Self-control; Self-renunciation; Self-realization—Perversion of Great Truths — Hindū and Christian Asceticism — Union with the Divine — How attained in Christianity — Bible Passages — Experience of the Christian Saint — The Vedānta and the Christian Heaven.

ONE more subject remains to be considered. Reference has frequently been made to the practices of *Yoga*—the Vedānta road to the highest saintliness. This is the supreme method of attaining liberation from continued births and union with the Divine.

Says the sage: 'No one who is not an ascetic brings his sacrificial works to perfection or obtains knowledge of the Highest Self. For it is said, By ascetic penance goodness is obtained, from goodness understanding is reached, from understanding the Self is obtained, and he who has obtained that does not return.'[1] Again: 'Having said farewell to all living things, having gone to the forest, and

[1] Mait.-Upan., iv. 3.

having renounced all sensuous objects, let man perceive the Self from his own body.'[1] And 'this is the rule for achieving it: restraint of the breath, restraint of the senses, meditation, fixed attention, investigation, absorption, these are called the sixfold Yoga.'[2] And again: 'If a man practises Yoga for six months, and is thoroughly free (from the outer world), then the perfect Yoga, which is endless, high, and hidden, is accomplished. But if a man, though well enlightened, is still pierced by passion and darkness, and attached to his children, wife, and house, then perfect Yoga is never accomplished.'[3] And once more: 'Living things are loved, not for the love of the living things, but for love of the Self. . . . It is the Self that one must see, and hear about, and think about, and meditate upon.'[4] 'And when, after cessation of mind, he sees his own Self, smaller than small, and shining, as the Highest Self, then, having seen his Self as the Self, he becomes Self-less, and because he is Self-less he is without limit, without cause, absorbed in thought. This is the highest mystery, viz., final liberation.'[5] Through a certain 'artery, when it has been joined by the breath, by the sacred syllable *Om*, and by the mind, let him proceed upwards, and after turning the tip of the tongue to the palate, without using any of the organs of sense, let greatness perceive greatness. From thence he goes to self-lessness, and through self-lessness he ceases to be enjoyer of pleasure and pain, he obtains aloneness (final deliverance).'[6]

Much prominence is given, as we have seen, to Yoga in the Bhagavad-gītā. 'He who on every side is without attachments, whatever hap of fair and foul, who neither likes nor dislikes, of such a one the understanding is well

[1] Mait-Upan., vi. 8.
[2] *Ibid.*, 18.
[3] *Ibid.*, 28.
[4] Brihad.-Upan. II., iv. 5.
[5] Mait-Upan., vi. 20.
[6] *Ibid.*, vi. 21.

poised. When, again, as a tortoise draws in on all sides its limbs, he withdraws his senses from the objects of sense, then is his understanding well poised.'[1] 'Renouncing all actions by Manas, the sovereign dweller in the body resteth serenely in the nine-gated city (the body, the city of Brahma), neither acting nor causing to act.'[2] 'Having made external contacts external, and with gaze fixed between the eyebrows; having made the outcoming and incoming breaths equal, sending forth through the nostrils, with senses, Manas and Buddhi controlled, solely devoted to liberation, having cast away hope, fear, and passion, he verily is liberated for ever.'[3] 'He who is satisfied with wisdom and knowledge, unchanging, the senses subdued, harmonized, to whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are the same, is called a Yogi.'[4]

In the Vedānta Sāra we are told that the secret knowledge of the Veda—*i.e.*, the unity of souls and of Brahma, as pure Intelligence, which is the purport of the Vedānta—is to be taught to '*a qualified person*' (*adhikārin*), the possessor of 'right knowledge.' The qualifications enjoined are of no ordinary kind.[5] Such a one must, by methodical reading of the Vedas and Vedāngas, in some one of his numerous births, have obtained a general idea of the whole system of Yoga. Then, by performing rites, such as prayers and the birth sacrifice, by penances, and mental devotional exercises, and by abstaining from things done with desire of reward, and from forbidden things, such as the slaying of a Brāhman—all of which are only subsidiary to the purification of the intellect and the concentration of the mind; by the possession of quiescence, self-restraint, absti-

[1] Bhagavad-gītā, ii. 57, 58.
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 13.
[3] *Ibid.*, v. 27, 28.
[4] *Ibid.*, vi. 8.
[5] See Colonel Jacob's 'Manual of Hindū Pantheism,' pp. 18–23, 114–120.

nence, endurance, *i.e.*, bearing the polarities of heat and cold—contemplation and faith, the recluse will have got rid of all sin, and thoroughly cleansed his mind. 'To the seeker of emancipation, who is tranquil in mind, who has subdued his senses, whose sins are gone, who conforms to the teaching of the Sāstras and is virtuous, and who, long and continuously, has followed a teacher, this is to be taught'[1]—*i.e.*, the discerning that Brahma is the only eternal substance. Other indispensable means for the obtaining of such a state are certain religious postures of the hands and feet, regulation and restraining of the breath, restraint of the organs of sense, and, above all, fixed attention of the 'internal organ' upon the 'Secondless Reality.' All drowsiness, distraction, passion, tasting of enjoyment, and similar hindrances, are to be resolutely controlled. And then, 'motionless as a lamp sheltered from the wind,' meditation, without recognition of subject and object, comes to be realized. As the Bhagavad-gītā says: 'As the flame of a lamp standing in a sheltered spot flickers not, such is the traditional simile of a mind-restrained Yogī, absorbed in the Yoga of the Self.'[2] And having gone through the various processes and postures, and pronouncing inaudibly the mystic syllable *Om*, 'in order to tranquillize circulation and retard the respiratory movements,' the state of *Samādhi*, the last and highest stage of Yoga, is reached. 'It is a state of perfect human hibernation, in which a Yogī is insensible to heat and cold, to pleasure and to pain. . . . It is the total suspension of the functions of respiration and circulation, but not the extinction of these functions.'[3] The supreme purpose of all these exercises is the removal of ignorance regarding

[1] Upadesasāhasrī, 324.

[2] Bhagavad-gītā, vi. 19.

[3] See a pamphlet on the Practice of Yoga, by Sub-Assistant-Surgeon Paul (Messrs. Lazarus and Co., Benares, 1882).

the essential unity of the universe, deliverance from further births, and the acquisition of the joy that is the essence of Brahma.

Some remarkable instances of such a state of hibernation, or trance, are on record, the best-authenticated and most recent being, perhaps, that of the Bengali ascetic Rāmakrishna. In Professor Max Müller's 'Life and Sayings,' etc., we read:[1]

> 'From all we can learn, it is quite clear that he had, by a powerful control of his breath and by long-continued ascetic exercises, arrived at such a pitch of nervous excitability that he could at any moment faint away or fall into a state of unconsciousness—the so-called Samādhi. This Samādhi may be looked at, however, from two points—as either purely physical or psychical. From an ordinary Samādhi a man may recover, as one recovers from a fainting-fit; but the true Samādhi consists in losing one's self, or finding one's self entirely in the Supreme Spirit. From this Samādhi there is no return, because there is nothing left that can return. A few men only who have reached it are enabled to return from it by means of a small remnant of their Ego, and through the efficacy of their wish to become the instructors and saviours of mankind. Something very like Samādhi is the state of deep, dreamless sleep, during which the soul is supposed to be with Brahman for a time, but able to return. This deep, unconscious sleep is one of the four states—waking, sleeping with dreams, sleeping without dreams, and dying. With Rāmakrishna it often happened that, when he had fallen into this deep sleep, he remained in it so long that his friends were afraid he would never return to consciousness, and so it was at last at the time of his death. He had fallen into a trance, and he never awoke.'

A stranger to such strange experiences, and a foreigner, ought not, perhaps, to intrude into so great a mystery. One would, at any rate, treat with all seriousness, and even sympathy, a subject essentially sacred, and an object of such sublime aim and passionate pursuit. At the same time, one cannot but feel that 'it is here,' as Barth says,

[1] P. 94.

'that this haughty theosophy collapses and pays the penalty of its disdain of all practice and observance.' Extraordinary processes are prescribed, which, if 'conscientiously observed,' he says, 'can only issue in folly and idiocy.'[1] It is at least evident that by habitual and incessant contemplative thought the recluse may not only weaken his rational conviction of external reality, but even lose the sense of his own individual personality.

To wake from the dream of existence, to extricate itself from future births, the soul, 'involuted in a succession of concentric material envelopes,' or sheaths, has to strip itself of these varying vestures, by operations in which a fanciful physiology plays a prominent part—for there is not a little materialism at the bottom of all these conceptions—and has literally to re-enter the heart again, in order to bring itself into contact with the Supreme Unity and reach pure Brahma.

It must penetrate through the unreal into the real; repress every feeling, desire, and thought; deliver itself from the bondage, not only of external things, but of its own individuality, and swoon away into unconsciousness—a species of self-hypnotism, *samādhi*. Thus, it is not order and perspicuity of ideas that lead to truth; but a state of cerebral exaltation, in which, if it were possible, every thought would cease—the last residue of abstraction pushed to its farthest limits. According to Patanjali himself, the author of the system, Yoga is 'the suppression of the transformations of the thinking principle.'[2] Union with the Divine—held by some to have been an idea of a later graft, and foreign to the original system—is not sought by pure feeling, high thought, and strenuous endeavour—by the activity of the conscience and the will—but by

[1] 'The Religions of India,' pp. 82, 83.

[2] Yoga Sūtras, i. 2.

vacuity and ecstasy. The pursuit is not one 'of perfect character, but of perfect characterless.' It is not exertion, but inertion—*vairāgya*—which is the path to liberation; and the highest ideal of the devout life is that led by the mendicant ascetic, the Sannyāsin, who has renounced everything—family, home, and worldly ties, and more, personality and the whole phenomenal world. He alone is qualified to know and become Brahma.

That is *Yoga*, which means, literally, the state of *union* between the lower Self and the higher Self—a condition which, rightly understood, all devout souls desire, but one that is achieved in Hindūism by a practice of discipline which Gough thinks must have been derived from the semi-savage races of the North, whose god Siva—the lord of Yogins—was the great typical ascetic. The votaries of modern spiritualism, clairvoyance, and animal magnetism, will find most of their theories and practices far outdone by the notions of the Yoga system; by the extraordinary powers gained over Nature, and the superhuman knowledge acquired by the occult influence of the will, which were in vogue in India over 2,000 years ago.

It must be borne in mind, however, that different kinds of Yoga are recognised by the different sects of the Hindūs. The saintly worker, who lives in the world, yet with a mind detached, is called *Karma* Yogī; he who seeks union through love with the God of love is called *Bhakti* Yogī; he who seeks union through mysticism, *Raja* Yogī; and he who seeks for unity of existence through philosophy, which is the highest point of the Upanishads, is called *Jnāna* Yogī. It is true, also, that the later developments and extravagances of asceticism, as depicted in the Epics, and those insane and cruel mortifications which are associated with the Yogis and Vairāgis of North India; the base practices of *Haṭha* Yoga—a system of

austere bodily gymnastics for the purpose of mental control and exaltation: these find no favour in the Upanishads and the Vedānta; though the severe régime of renunciation and abstraction therein prescribed undoubtedly prepared the way for them, and opened the door for much imposture.

Having reached the height of ecstatic vision and reunion, the perfect sage so long as he lives—though of no further practical use to the world, for he is now 'the liberated but still living man'—may do good and evil, and incur no stain. 'He that knows the truth,' says one of the Upanishads, 'is sullied neither by good actions nor by evil actions'; 'As water adheres not to a lotus-leaf, so no sinful deed adheres to one who knows thus.'[1] Similarly the Bhagavad-gītā: 'He who acteth, placing all actions in Brahma, abandoning attachment, is unpolluted by sin as a lotus-leaf by the waters.'[2] And again: 'The thought afflicts him not, What good have I left undone, what evil done?'[3] 'Then a thief is not a thief, a murderer not a murderer . . . he is not followed by good, not followed by evil.'[4] The same teaching is found in the Epics: 'As a water-bird is not defiled by moving in the water, so a liberated Yogi is not polluted by merit or demerit.' 'Evil adheres not to an enlightened man, any more than water clings to a leaf.'[5] Very singular and questionable morality, whose exercise at all by one already passed into a state of practical unconsciousness it is difficult to understand. But in the theosophy of the anchorite of the forest, 'action and passion, works and the recompense of works, the religion of ancestral rites and usages, the sacrifices and the gods sacrificed to, are alike unreal. They are figments of the

[1] Chhāndogya-Upan. IV., xiv. 3. [2] Gītā v. 10.
[3] Taittirīya-Upan. ii. 9. [4] Brihad.-Upan. IV., iii. 22.
[5] Mahābhārata, xii. 249, 17; 299, 7.

world-fiction, and for the finished theosophist, they have no existence.'[1] Every work, whether virtuous or vicious, is but a gesture in a dream. So the Buddhist enlightened one—the fictitious Mahātma—no longer a citizen of earth in his inmost nature, continues to live on in the first rest of *Nirvāna*, as a completed being. The perfect Yogī is a sovereign being, over whom nothing perishable has power any more—not even the laws of Nature. Death even can add nothing to his bliss; it will only abolish the last appearance of duality. And then, so far as he, an individual, is concerned, he is gone, passed into extinction or everlasting Nirvāna or repose. For, as Professor Wilson observes: 'Annihilation, as regards individuals, is as much the ultimate destiny of the soul as it is of the body, and "*Not to be*" is the melancholy result of the religion and philosophy of the Hindūs.'[2]

A more recent Sanskrit scholar, Colonel Jacob, observes on the moral results of Hindūism generally: 'Some of the Upanishads, the chief source of the Vedānta doctrine, do *without any qualification* declare that sin and virtue are alike to one who knows Brahma; and the system is therefore rightly charged with immorality. But, independently of such teaching as this, what moral results could possibly be expected from a system so devoid of motives for a life of true purity? The Supreme Being, Brahma, is a cold Impersonality, out of relation with the world, unconscious of its own existence and of ours and devoid of all attributes and qualities. The so-called personal God, the first manifestation of the Impersonal, turns out on examination to be a myth; there is no God apart from ourselves, no Creator, no Holy Being, no Father, no Judge—no one, in a word, to adore, to love, or to fear.

[1] Gough's 'Philosophy of the Upanishads,' p. 263.
[2] 'Essays on the Religion of the Hindus,' ii. 114.

And as for ourselves, we are only unreal actors on the semblance of a stage! The goal is worthy of such a creed, being no less than the complete extinction of all spiritual, mental, and bodily powers by absorption into the Impersonal.' [1]

Now, though it is difficult to suppose that any but a comparatively few in the present day, even in India, really rejoice in such a prospect as this, in the idea of an impersonal Essence in which their own individuality is to be merged and lost for ever, and make this an object of real and earnest endeavour, who think it sweet 'to be wrecked in the ocean of the Infinite,' the whole subject is yet so great and suggestive that it cannot but command attention. For fanciful, exaggerated, and essentially erroneous as Christians believe it to be, it yet witnesses, as all great errors do, to great truths; and it is only by distinctly recognising and liberating the *truth* that underlies the error, and of which the error is the counterpart, that error can be successfully met and overcome.

And, in the first place, *contemplation—meditation*—on which the Upanishads and Vedānta insist so much, plays a most important part in the religious life. No doubt the influences of an Indian climate, which indispose one for active exertion, have had much to do with the subordination of physical to spiritual life, with the felicity felt in inward contemplation and complete quiescence; and Indian Christianity should contribute something very beautiful and true, on the side of meditative worship, to the overactive, bustling life of the West. With our Western instinct, the '*will to live*,' for which Matthew Arnold rebuked his fellows, we have done little to change the mind of India; and, indeed, we ourselves need more quiet and concentration of thought in our religion, and in

[1] 'Hindū Pantheism,' pp. 129, 130.

this respect may learn something from the Vedānta. Yet Christianity itself has had its old monastic and conventual type of life, with its absorbing mysticism, as has been so well depicted in Tennyson's poems 'St. Agnes' Eve' and 'Sir Galahad.' And for some spirits it may have been the only way of redemption from the tyranny of the present world. And for all periods of solitude and secret prayer, silent spaces wherein the soul may give itself up to intense communion with God, are the means of heightening, broadening, deepening the spiritual life. There is a stretch of spirit that obscures for the time the multitudinous trivialities of earth; and the 'ampler ether,' the 'diviner air,' on the mountain summits of the soul, stimulates clear thinking, and lofty aspirations, and large enthusiasms.

> 'This is thy hour, O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
> Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson done,
> Thee fully forth emerging, pondering the themes thou lovest best,
> Night, sleep, death, and the stars.'

Intercourse with God is the great Christian reality. It is an act of communing with One whom we know to be other than ourselves, One who has revealed Himself to us, and who is able to help us in every time of need. But that is not the act of the Hindū sage, whose prime object is not to commune with Brahma, but to meditate on certain negative attributes—not gross, not subtle—not on righteousness and mercy; and then to understand his identity with It: it is to *know* rather than to *be* or *do*. The process is intellectual rather than moral, though the intellect itself is to be submerged in the end. The aim of the Hindū recluse is not to *become* something, but to come to a true understanding of reality. That is not moral development, even though morality may have some part

to play in the initial process. What the Christian seeks is not so much to know as to be; sanctity, moral perfection of character is what he desires. Hence the felt need of *Prayer*. But Divine grace and assistance are inconsistent superfluities in such a state as the orthodox Vedāntist supposes, since they involve duality. The reciprocal activities of love, worship, adoration, can find no place in such a system. We cannot worship an impersonal Somewhat. If the main doctrine of the Vedānta be true, then prayer—the universal exercise in which men of every clime can meet at the feet of one common Father—and worship—the noblest activity of the soul— must be abandoned. And one may meditate all his life on what one imagines to be God, and get no nearer to Him, unless He reveal Himself.

Further, what is the *real value* and ultimate utility of all such contemplative and devotional exercises? These pauses are the times from which the soul, quickened and fed, may *issue forth* refreshed and renewed, not recede still further from the world into a useless state of apathy and unconsciousness. That is their chief intention, to vivify and expand the soul—to distribute in public those forces we accumulate in private. The training for God is the beginning of *earthly* wisdom. The powers of mind that fit us for heaven are precisely those that fit us for earth. 'It is from within the Divine sanctuary that we are to be armed for the battle of life. It is in meeting my God that I learn to meet my brother. It is behind the veil of eternity that I speak to the things of time.'

The religious life of the rishis stops with the climax of abstract contemplation; it does not *pass into action*. But high endeavour is a greater test of capacity than merely meditating. What of the novelist who always carries his story in his brain? What of the poet who

never puts his thrilling thoughts on paper? What of the artist who never transferred his noble conceptions to the canvas? And what of the sage who never realized, never actualized, his high ideals? It is only then that the real power of the man appears. The expert in Christianity, at any rate, is not the man who has learned about it, but he who has *lived* it. And true religion is a thing which must be learned by doing it. We may know the way to heaven, yet never walk it. For truth and knowledge to be of any value, they must cease to be abstract and academic; they must be translated into high and noble deeds, active philanthropy, and a feeling or fraternity. That is why the West has progressed, while the immobile East has been stationary for centuries: it has put into action its religious truths. Without their application to the living questions of social and national life, all religious ideals and aspirations are but leaves of a barren tree. Mazzini points out, in his fine essay on 'The Condition and Progress of Europe,' that the individual conscience and social tradition are the only two criteria which we possess for realizing the truth. But conscience has no part in the system of Patanjali any more than in the fatalism of Spinoza. As the Deity has no concern with human actions, whether good or bad, so the 'perfect man' lives in a state of complete isolation in which all necessity for action and all sense of duty are entirely lost. And a dreamy existence in a *Māyā* world, such as the Vedānta postulates, can never act as a stimulant to moral life generally, or give an impulse to the resuscitation of national character. A world and a life that are all Māyā are obviously not worth reforming.

And if mystic meditation means simply *self-seeking*, the soul itself shrivels and dies by a natural process. And no one can question that the system of the Upanishads,

like the old monastic system, was mainly a self-regarding one. It is the relinquishment for one's own sake of the world and our fellow-men, our families and friends, instead of the endeavour to regenerate them; aiming at a solitary salvation at the expense of our duty to others. It is the destruction of the social passion and of the idea of love. Impelled by the very necessity of one's nature to seek only what is profitable, there is no possibility of self-sacrifice. How different the Gospel of Jesus, which means not the winning of heaven, but the redemption of earth! 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it' (Mark viii. 35). It is impossible for the true Christian to live a life isolated and alone and out of sympathy with his fellows; he yearns for a corporate life, a life of brotherhood; he feels the need of the 'communion of saints' and of a common worship. A man who lives in religious solitude, sharing no other man's sorrow and gladness, misses more than half the strength and nearly all the joy of life, while grace and beauty of character are quite impossible to him. Thus, the highest Hindū doctrine of society and duty, fully developed in Buddha's extreme asceticism, unfits it altogether for a universal religion. It is an ideal for monks and not for men. The religion that requires a man to retire from the active duties of the world, and to think out his salvation in a solitary hermitage, carries with it the seeds of its own condemnation. The emancipation of the individual soul is a miserable conception; while throwing away self *for the sake of humanity*, losing life to gain it, is the sublime and essential idea of the Gospel.

The following is a striking admission from one of the Brahmist papers as to the source of the idea of Prayer

and of other elements of piety, and affords a valuable Hindū estimate of Vedāntism:

'The third and last, but in many respects the most important, element of Brahmo devotion, namely, prayer, with its accompanying elements of piety—repentance and moral struggle—is pre-eminently a Christian element of piety. There is little or no prayer in Vedantism; it is pre-eminently a contemplative, and not an ethical, religion. Apart from a negative purity of mind which it cultivates as a preparation for deep and undisturbed meditation, it is almost as much dead to the moral interests of man as to his worldly interests. There is prayer in Vaishnavism, but it is not a very prominent feature in it. It would not be too much to say that it is from Christianity that Brahmos have learnt to pray, and prayer has been, and will continue to be, our salvation—the salvation of India. Vedantism, with its lofty Meditation, could not raise India. Vaishnavism, notwithstanding its high ideal of *Bhakti*, could not purify and reform India, though its services have been most valuable in some respects. For its exclusive attention to the emotional side of piety, for not giving prominence to the moral elements of religion, it failed to establish the kingdom of God in the soul—the object it sought to attain. It is prayer, repentance, and moral struggle—elements which the Brahmo Samaj has inherited from Christianity—that have made the crude monotheism which our Vedantic forefathers bequeathed to us, a religion of life. It is these Christian elements of piety that have saved us from that quietude and moral torpor to which Vedantic Meditation consigns the mind, when it is cultivated to the exclusion of other elements of piety. It is these elements that have saved us from that spiritual voluptuousness and aversion to an active life which necessarily result from the exclusive emotionalism characteristic of Vaishnavism. It is the spirit of Christianity which has taught us that the service of man is the service of God, and that it is an integral, an indispensable, part of true piety. True, Vaishnavism recognises the "service of God" as a part of piety, but this "service" is not identical with the service of man; it is the service of images representing Vishnu. It is Christianity that has taught us the true meaning of the service of God. It is Christianity also which has taught us that the purification and reformation of our domestic and social life is an integral part of religion—a lesson which the best forms of Hinduism are ignorant of. It is the spirit of Christianity that gives life and energy to our social aims, aspirations, and efforts. We set our face against all Hindu revivals and all special movements on the

part of Brahmos in favour of Hindu modes of spiritual culture, mainly because we are afraid that such movements will inevitably lead, as they are already leading, to a rejection of the Christian or ethical elements of religion: prayer, repentance, moral struggle, active philanthropy, and social reform—elements which are not congenial to the nature of the typical Hindu. But these constitute the very life of Brahmoism. Without Vedantic Meditation and the ecstatic *Bhakti* of Vaishnavism, Brahmoism would be poor; but without the ethical and practical spirit of Christianity Brahmoism would die.'[1]

Passing now to the strange and difficult subject of *Yoga*, and to the severe ascetic exercises required to reach it, here again we see the perversion of a most important truth. The Yoga system of Patanjali is a theistic branch of the atheistic Sānkhya system of Kapila, whose teaching, as pointed out by Mr. Davies in his 'Hindū Philosophy,'[2] is closely allied with the latest philosophy of Germany, as set forth by Schopenhauer's, 'World as Will and Idea' and Von Hartmann's 'Philosophy of the Unconscious'; while Patanjali's system bears a close resemblance to Spinoza's exposition of God and Nature. All these philosophical systems are alike pessimistic, and regard conscious life as an unmixed evil made miserable by pain; maintaining, with Jeremy Bentham, that pain is the only evil in the world, and the necessary consequence of existence. The ideal state is thus the unconscious, impassive life, and the highest aim is, therefore, not goodness nor self-sacrifice for others, but '*self-suppression*, the annihilation of the conscious self, which is the cardinal principle of Buddhism.' In his Sānkhya Sūtras (i. 1) Kapila taught that 'the complete destruction of pain is the highest object of man.' With him and with Patanjali there is no moral greatness in the suffering and discipline of pain, and no moral elevation and refinement in sharing the pain of others, and no hope for the world in any

[1] *The Indian Messenger* (Calcutta). [2] See p. 102 and Note D.

social schemes of amendment or in any Gospel of redemption. The one end of philosophy is for each individual life to escape as quickly as possible from all contact with matter to the final goal of a painless, unconscious, unbroken repose.

This is the object of all Yoga exercises, and bearing as they do some resemblance to the system of Zeno, it must be allowed that they present a masculine and even sublime side, as well as a weak and morbid one. The whole-hearted surrender, the strenuous endeavour, of these ancient sages to reach what they conceived to be the Infinite must command our admiration ; while *self-control* —the complete mastery of the appetites and passions—without which Yoga cannot be obtained, is one of the finest virtues, and rightly understood, essential to true manhood.

Further, *death to self and death to the world*, as signified in Yoga, is one of the highest states of mind it is possible to reach. It is essentially Christian, though the nominal Christian may know very little about it. The idea of a stern contest going on between the flesh and the spirit (Rom. vii. and viii.), of the necessity of mortifying the unholy deeds of the body—uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness (Col. iii. 5)—even of crucifying the flesh with the passions and lusts (Gal. v. 24), and of the world being crucified unto us (vi. 24) : such an idea is essential to the religion of Christ, and pervades the New Testament.

And no religion, not even that of Buddha, requires more absolute *self-renunciation* than that of Christ, though few of His followers really reach it. Indeed, He probably recognises a nearer approach to the practice of His own teaching in the East, where a worthy Object alone is needed for the true cultivation of the virtues of Yoga and Bhakti. 'He

that loveth father or mother *more than Me* is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me' (Matt. x. 37). 'Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple' (Luke xiv. 27). 'Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, cannot be My disciple' (xiv. 33). That is Christian Yoga—a severe and arduous exercise, yet not incompatible with the doing of our duty in the world.

For in Christ we have gained a new conception of renunciation—one that Buddha never understood—and have found through Him that *desire* is good, and great, and eternal. In the Hindū Yoga, mortification is extended to *all* desire, good as well as evil, in order to reach that indifference which, strangely enough, is the condition of pure intelligence. In the Christian Yoga the evil desires are to be suppressed that the good ones may be more strenuously developed in pursuit of the ideal: 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matt. v. 48). Christian piety—the reverse of the Hindū and Buddhist type—is based on joy, and can never be manifested by misery, which cannot be pleasing to God. Christ's goal was never death, but life—life more abundant, life for evermore; and it was the beauty and the joy of life which made it worth dying for. To the unimpassioned conception of the East, Christ thus opposes His own ideal of human life, as a life full of energy and power, and full of love to others; and *self-realization*, not self-renunciation, becomes the highest end of existence. Renunciation is but the means to an end, and the end is *fulness of life*. In the realization of the true Christian idea of renunciation, the East and the West must yet unite; the 'will to live' of the West, while being imparted to the East, becoming pervaded by its peace.

We thus see that the extreme self-suppression, the

crushing out of natural instincts and desires, and all the penances and self-torture of the Indian Yogi and ascetic—for which the Upanishads prepared the soil—are *mistaken exaggerations* of the idea of *self-sacrifice*, which is indispensable to all true religion. The body may be kept in subjection without being maimed and mortified; the senses and appetites may be restrained without being destroyed; the feelings and affections may be disciplined without being stifled.

It is also true that solitude and self-denial, though they may be helpful to abstraction, do not necessarily conduce to a holy life. Bishop Butler who knew human nature so well, has observed with reference to ascetic practices: 'Those who aimed at the destruction of the passions upon the foot of philosophy appear to have had better success in eradicating the affections of tenderness and compassion than the passions of envy, pride, and resentment.'[1] Other-worldliness *may* be as immoral as what is called worldliness. There is an Indian proverb that says that 'the most austere hermit is the most consummate rogue.' The Stoic, who in philosophical pride affected to despise wealth and pleasure, pain and death, and pretended to be perfect and equal to God, proved after all to be a mere man of like passions as his fellows. And why? Because it is only by a constant living in the presence of God that men can conquer the evil tendencies of their nature and attain to the purity and holiness which God demands. The sages of the Upanishads transpose this process, and make the presence of God the end and result of a course of mortification. Christianity starts with the presence and help of God, and through them achieves the mastery over the lower self.

Men and women there have always been who have attempted to retire from the world altogether, only to find

[1] See Macaulay's Essay on Lord Bacon.

in cloister or in forest the foul exhalations of earth rather than the sweet dews of heaven; that the one devil from whom they have fled in the city has here taken to himself seven devils more. Christianity has even had its St. Simeon Stylites—the Syrian saint who, in order to acquire religious merit and to be nearer heaven, spent thirty-seven years on the tops of different pillars, and was blistered by the sun by day and stung by the frost at night. But since self was never absent from his thought, his soul still cleaved to sensual pleasures.

The special deformity of this exaggerated asceticism is its extreme self-righteousness and repellent selfishness, to say nothing of the encouragement to imposture to which it directly tends. Are not the practices prescribed for Yoga, though representing a lofty religious effort, and therefore to be reverently regarded, devoid of any beneficent purpose? What benefit do they confer upon the world? The mere ideal of self-suppression is sadly imperfect, and really unmoral, unless inspired by the love of God and man. It is this vast underlying contrast in aim and motive that differentiates the Hindū and Christian ideals. The Christian ideal is to love God with all our heart, and to love our fellows as ourselves—love to God shown in love to man. A religion that does not make *others* better is not true religion. If we practise self-denial merely for the sake of showing power over self, for the sake of self-discipline, it is the most miserable of all delusions. It simply generates spiritual pride. On the other hand, if we practise it for the sake of another, it becomes the highest religious act. 'To bear pain for the sake of bearing it,' as F. W. Robertson has said, 'has no moral quality at all; but to bear it rather than surrender truth, or in order to save another, is positive enjoyment, as well as ennobling to the soul.'

The impersonal God of the Vedānta, as we have seen, is

no object of personal love; so that it is, after all, nothing more than one's own self which one is bent on realizing—a bigger self, indeed, but nothing to call out altruistic affection. Yoga thus practised is only 'a magnified and refined cultus of self—in fact, egoism on a colossal scale.' Which exhibits the highest ideal—the life of the Yogi, wasted in solitary self-discipline till unconsciousness is achieved, or that of Christ, the champion of the poor and oppressed, who 'went about doing good,' and whose continuous sacrifice was for others, not for self? There we have the great distinction between Christian and Hindū asceticism and self-denial. The true Christian ascetic is not the recluse, but the philanthropist, the man who will give up everything for the sake of the present and eternal good of his fellow-men. And surely it is a nobler thing to act according to the dictates of reason and conscience in moral choices, and in an active life, than to devote the whole mental energy to annihilating the distinction between being and non-being.

If it be urged that the moral course has already been gone through, and that the sage has reached the moral zenith of his life, when he may leave such things behind, the very idea of leaving the most important of all things behind is self-condemnatory. 'A man who surrenders the effort to be better and more useful in favour of the effort to be wiser is committing a species of suicide. It is to exercise only a fraction of the power possessed by the soul; a retreat on the part of the monarch into a secluded corner of his empire; an abandonment of all departments of government but one, and that not the highest; a melancholy and senseless abdication.'[1] 'He most lives who thinks most—feels the noblest—acts the best.'

[1] The Calcutta *Epiphany*.

But it will be further urged that the sublime *end in view* of all this has to be considered, which is nothing short of *union with the Supreme Spirit*, and then a condition of unbroken and eternal peace.

Now, here, unquestionably, the Vedāntist is at his best. Here we have the highest consummation of religion. The conception is the truest and most sacred that the soul can possibly entertain. And this aspiration after the Divine, this longing for union with God, the Centre and Source of all being, constitutes the strength and charm of pantheism, and is the burden of the Upanishads. And if the religion of Christ did not offer an equivalent, and more, the ideal of the Vedānta would be unsurpassed; though what its *realization* actually may be we cannot tell, since no one has ever related or recorded his experience; whereas the Christian union has been realized, and testified to, by thousands of saintly souls.

Union with God—the Christian knows nothing higher. But he reaches it in a different way from that of the Vedānta; he reaches it through the only way by which it is possible to reach it: not by abstract thought, by stretches of the imagination, by stupendous self-effort, and by the final loss of all that is highest in man and the universe—personality—but through the Divine Man, who is a fact of history, in whose mysterious nature the Divine and the human *are* united, and who has made this union possible to all who become livingly united unto Him. The ideal of the Indian is the acquisition of that wisdom, which, by destroying ignorance, crushes out all the causes of misery, and, by putting an end to the curse of existence, loses the finite in the Infinite. Without any painful and wearisome search, the Christian reaches at once the highest wisdom in Christ himself, who, by removing man's ignorance of God through His revelation of God's Fatherly character, removes

also the chief cause of human misery—man's sinful distrust of God—and fills the soul with Divine peace and joy.

We see this great truth not only *taught* by Christ, as one of the fundamental truths of religion, but gloriously *illustrated in the Incarnation* itself. All along through human history there has been a world-process in which the Eternal Idea has sought its realization, and God has united Himself to, and manifested Himself in, humanity, the self-revelation reaching its highest point and fullest expression in the person and life of Christ. By the union of the Eternal Logos with the highest creature, in Jesus of Nazareth, the circle of being was made complete. For the Incarnation not only brought the invisible and unknown God within the range of our human sympathies, but it was also a *revelation of human nature*, and changed for us the whole aspect of our moral and spiritual life, by disclosing the presence of a Divine and infinite element in our nature, by revealing an ideal glory and beauty in man, an essential affinity (*sārūpya*), though not identity (*sāyujya*), with the nature of God. 'The creature can at no time be equal with its Creator; and as man may not become God, God, out of the great love He bore the world, was willing to become man.' As Shelling said: 'Only the personal can heal the personal, and God must become man that man may come again to God.'

For it is the teaching of the Bible that man was originally created in the image of God, and therefore destined for eternal union with Him. But this image was obscured by sin, and men lost the knowledge of God, and fashioned gods of their own imaginings. Christ, the Revealer of God, comes, and, having 'put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. ix. 26), has reconciled man to God, and revealed afresh the union. When the Divine Son became incarnate, He took upon Him human nature, and

by doing so revealed the essential unity of God and man. He found the Divinity, which is the real man, behind every human being, and in so doing established also the truth of universal brotherhood. God and man are related to each other as Father and son, and apart from that truth universal brotherhood is an empty name.

'He that hath seen *Me*,' says Christ, 'hath seen the *Father*' (John xiv. 9). 'I and the Father are *one*' (x. 30). 'In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and *ye in Me*, and *I in you*' (xiv. 20). 'That they all may be one, even as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be *in Us*' (xvii. 21). 'I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be *perfected into one*' (xvii. 23). 'God hath granted unto us precious and exceeding great promises, that through these ye may become *partakers of the Divine nature*, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust' (2 Pet. i. 4).

'*Partakers of the Divine nature*.' The Vedāntist can offer the Christian nothing that he does not already possess, and possess in a still higher measure, and far greater reality. For with no loss of conscious personality, but with the capacity for power and blessedness intensified and heightened to an infinite degree, he participates in that Nature. One with the Supreme Being without realizing and enjoying it! Well might the practical *Dvaita*, Mādhavāchārya, turn such a conception into ridicule. The Christian saint experiences not only the highest state of mind that a Hindū philosopher has ever reached on earth, but has risen to a higher state of knowledge and consciousness than the non-Christian sage could ever dream of.

The highest state that the ancient sage reached was that of self-abnegation—death to self and death to the world. Yet, according to Christ, this moral state is only the threshold of the highest spiritual Christian consciousness.

It is only when death to self and death to the world have been truly experienced that the highest consciousness possible to the Christian saint can begin. The Vedāntist can only say, 'I am crucified to the world'; the Christian can add, 'Nevertheless *I live*.' The Vedāntist can only say, 'No longer I'; the Christian rises higher, and says, 'No longer I, but *Christ liveth in me*' (Gal. ii. 20)—marvellous words which have to be experienced to be understood. At every stage there is no negation, but positive attainment of life, more life and fuller; more personal and intense, like the life of Him who is alive for evermore.

And why is this? The sage of the Vedānta has nothing upon which to fix his thoughts but *self*: they do not rest on the basis of truth and of objective reality. The Christian has the sublimest and most real object on which to centre his thoughts—the Incarnate Lord. The most entrancing and ennobling consciousness is that of being united with and absorbed with Christ, in whom all truth and loveliness are concentrated. The experience of the Christian saint is so lofty and unique that Christ declared that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than the greatest of all past seers and prophets (Luke vii. 28). A peace that passeth all understanding is the possession of the soul that exercises Yoga—union—with the glorified God-Man.[1]

The Christian Gospel thus offers all that the Vedānta offers, and infinitely more. So true is it that every previous revelation flows into the revelation we have in Christ, and loses itself in Him. Christ includes all teachers. All 'other masters' are in Christ. We do not deny the truths they taught; we can delight in all. We can give heed to all the prophets; but every truth in every prophet melts into the truth we have in Christ. And Christ tells us that *life*, not death, is what our souls are made for. That is

[1] See on this point *The Epiphany*, September, 1894.

His distinctive message to the non-Christian world. To be made one with the Divine, 'not in the dull abyss of characterless nonentity, lapsing from the personal down to the impersonal, from the animate to the inanimate, from the self back to the mere thing'; but in the reciprocal embrace of conscious love, mutually realized and enjoyed—that is, the true and highest *bhakti-yoga*—knowing even as we are known.

The Yoga of the Vedānta stands for the Christian heaven. There is, indeed, much that is sublime and true in the ideal end of the Vedāntist: the promise of release from the sorrows of the heart and the burdens of existence; of a 'repose unbroken by a dream,' of everlasting peace. And the promise is an imperfect forecast of Christian experience. The Christian heaven is no material paradise of the future, no lower transitory state, as known to Brāhmanism, and therefore unsatisfactory; it corresponds with the ultimate of the Upanishads, and signifies a beatific state of knowledge, holiness, and joy, in the very presence of God, of which no previous religion had the slightest conception. It is begun in a life of faith and active goodness, realized in Christ, here on earth, and consummated in a higher, richer fruition of existence hereafter—the fullest, personal life of the spirit for evermore. 'Absent from the body . . . at home with the Lord' (2 Cor. v. 8). The promise of the Vedānta is no promise of felicity such as this, but of a *Nirvāna* in which the soul shall cease to be a soul, and be merged into the one characterless being, the characterless beatitude.

CHAPTER XV

VEDANTISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Limitations of the Vedānta—Not open or suited to all—Disqualified for a Universal Religion—What has it done for India?—Contrasted with the Bible—Old Religions subverted by Civilization—No Regenerating Power—Hindū Testimonies—The Hope of India—Revival of Ancient Hindūism—Progress, not Retrogression—Recovery of Lost Spirituality—Value of the Vedānta—Its Contribution to Indian Christianity—Meeting of the East and the West.

OUR last reflection is that this true knowledge of God and future felicity are *open to all.* For Christ calls the least and the lowest, the guiltiest and most degraded, of mankind to His kingdom, to become sons of God, and perfect as He is perfect.

The great flaw in the Vedānta system is the limit of the highest salvation to an exceedingly difficult process, demanding an acquaintance with metaphysical problems to which the poor and unlearned, the woman and the child, cannot possibly attain; although all are alike God's children, with the same needs and aspirations, the same claims and rights. Hence we have the invidious distinction which characterizes all such religions, that of an esoteric and exoteric system—one secret, the other open; the former for adepts, the latter for the masses; a speculative philosophy for the

few, a gross, material worship for the many: and whoever lacks speculative intellect must suffer the miseries of life. For in a world where only the few have knowledge, the highest salvation can come, not to the poor in spirit, but only to the elect circle of the thinkers. Such a system is not suited to men of all temperaments, all types of mind and character, all degrees of intellect, all stages of life; and is inconsistent with the Divine method in Nature, where God's best gifts are universal, where His light shines and His pure air circulates alike for all. And 'what is not good for the swarm is not good for the bees,' according to the old sentiment finely expressed by Marcus Aurelius.

If the dream of a universal religion be true, that religion cannot possibly be based on the Upanishads and the Vedānta. To make them the religion of a people is to declare it to be a national or, rather, local affair, and not cosmopolitan; it is to confine it to a corner of the globe, and to a select coterie even in that corner. For if, as it has been often urged, this ancient Indian system can be properly understood only in the original Sanskrit, and if this be true religion at its highest, then it depends, not only on superior intellect, but also on special linguistic talent, and talent to study a dead language! Its pursuit, to say the least, is impracticable. And no religion that is recondite, and that requires a pandit or learned person to explain it, can ever be the universal religion. That must be accessible to all, easily understood by all, capable of world-wide expansion, and of meeting the needs of every land and race.

There is but *one* science of the universe, one astronomy, and one geography, and one chemistry, for all the globe; and if the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man be true, there can be but *one* bond of spiritual union for such a family; one religion, which, while embodied in

varying national *forms*, yet gives expression to the same spiritual facts that are common to all mankind. True religion deals with universal problems connected with God and man, and man's duty to God and to his fellow, and with sin and salvation ; and when solutions of these are found for one people, they are found for all. There is nothing local or national about such problems and about the knowledge that illumines them ; the light thrown upon them must of necessity be such as all nations can appreciate; the answers given to the questions arising out of them must be universally true. Such a religion, while treating all men as equal in the sight of God, must avoid matters on which men are sure to differ, such as ceremonials, minute rituals, and theological subtleties, and must deal supremely with the universal needs and realities of character and life. These, again, must be presented in a form adapted to the capacity of all, independent of language, *āchāryas*, and priests, and exhibited in an attractive and commanding Personality, in whose faultless example the living principle expounded can be seen in action.[1]

The knowledge of God, to be necessary for salvation, must be of such simple, spiritual, and concrete kind as to be available, not only for a few deep thinkers and acute reasoners, the elect of the race, but for 'the man in the street,' for the striving throng of busy toilers, whose labour is so necessary to the welfare and progress of mankind; who cannot possibly solve the problems of life by philosophical meditation, but whose souls are as dear to God as that of the recluse. And just as a school is best judged, not by the achievements of its few brilliant scholars, but by what it makes of the mass of its ordinary, commonplace lads, so it is the glory of Christianity, that it is not only

[1] See an excellent lecture on 'Universal Religion,' by E. P. Rice, B.A. (Madras: Lawrence Asylum Press, 1897).

welcomed by souls 'naturally Christian,' but has the means to take hold of and transform the mediocre multitude, who in all levels of society are spiritually dull and worldly, together with the great masses and the outcasts, who have been contemptuously abandoned by other faiths, and for whom the philosophy of the Vedānta, in particular, has as yet done nothing. What has it done for the women and the widows, the fallen and the oppressed, the pariahs, publicans, and sinners; while the religion of Christ has been all over the world seeking to save the lost? Has it promoted popular education, the elevation of women, and good government; has it abolished caste and polygamy; driven away the dancing-girls from the temples; repressed vice and encouraged virtue?

'Was it this philosophy,' asks the late Bishop Caldwell, 'which abolished female infanticide, the Meriah sacrifice, and the burning of widows? Is it this which is covering the country with a network of railways and telegraphs? Is it this which has kindled among the native inhabitants of India the spirit of improvement and enterprise which is now apparent? What could be expected of the philosophy or apathy but that it should leave things to take their course? There is much real work now being done in India in the way of teaching truth, putting down evil, and promoting the public welfare; but that work is being done, not by Vedāntists or quietists of any school, but by Christians from Europe, whose highest philosophy is to do good, and by those natives of India who have been stimulated by the teaching and example of Europeans to choose a similar philosophy.[1]

Fifty years of *Christian* influence have done more for the true welfare of India than a thousand years of the Vedānta.

How has it thus come to pass that the fates of the old Indian classics and of the Bible, their influence on the moral and social improvement of the world, have been so different? Covering the course of the world from the

[1] 'Krishna and the Bhagavad-gītā, pp. 27, 28.

creation to the final restitution of all things, the Bible is embedded in, and associated with, the past history of the race; yet it is not a preacher of ancient history or philosophy, but of the Living God, and of His relation to the living facts of to-day. Addressed to all men without distinction, and having intimate spiritual concerns with all men, it is the Book for the million, and deals with all the duties and problems of practical life. The late Dean Stanley calls the Bible the guiding book of the world's history, and speaks of its 'insight into the wants of men far beyond the age in which it was written.' He refers to that modern element which we find in the Bible; to the enforcement of principles and duties which for years and centuries lay almost unperceived, but which are now seen to have been in accordance with the utmost requirements of philosophy and civilization.

This is exactly what is wanting in the old religions. There lacks in every one of them the principles of progress, and that element of universality which is Christianity's distinctive glory. They have no social promise in them. Their fatal lack of motive power, their imperfect morality, and their incapacity to give vitality and vigour to their principles, is the secret of their failure. Social degeneracy is the historic outcome. There is no trace in them of any 'modern element,' of universal adaptation to the wants of men. They have reflected the climate, country, race, time, in which they arose; and whatever influence they may have exerted, they did not draw nations out of the beaten track in which they had lived. 'Notwithstanding the material and political revolutions which they underwent,' says M. Guizot, 'these ancient nations followed in the same ways, and retained the same propensities as before.'[1] For the old creeds are

[1] 'Meditations on the Essence of Christianity,' pp. 58, 59.

not fitted to harmonize with the intellectual, social, and moral progress of the modern world. Advancing civilization destroyed the religions of Greece and Rome as it is paralyzing the popular religions of India to-day. Only Christianity can bear 'the brunt of advancing civilization.' It is the only religion that comports with the march of modern progress, as represented by the foremost nations of the world. 'There is but one example of a religion,' says Mr. Lecky, 'which is not necessarily subverted by civilization, and that example is Christianity.'[1] New and fresh among the old, decadent cultures, it has manifested, again and again in its history, remarkable vitality; while it is also capable, by the regenerating power of its spiritual teachings and moral ideals, and by the new and higher type of manhood which these produce, of preparing any nation to assimilate the best results of progress, and to enter on a new and nobler social and political career: so vital is the connection between the highest religious thought and the moral and social life of a people. And what have all the philosophies and sciences of the world done for the regeneration and progress of mankind compared with the one truth—'*God is love.*'?

That the moral forces of the ethnic religions are not capable of uplifting and regenerating society is strikingly seen in India to-day; while we have ample proofs of the transforming and elevating power of Christianity. And this is freely admitted by Hindūs themselves. It was but a few years ago that a Brāhman official, to whom the Madras Government gave the important duty of writing the 'Progress Report' of the Presidency, pointed out that from a Hindū standpoint there was no hope for the social amelioration of the out-caste pariahs within Hindūism.

[1] 'Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe,' vol. i., p. 306.

There was but one way for them to rise, and that was to renounce Hindūism, and accept either Mohammedanism or Christianity. A still more emphatic testimony was borne by the Brāhman Commissioner of the census of 1891, for the State of Travancore, and submitted in a State paper to the native Prince:

'The heroism o. raising the low from the slough of debasement is an element of civilization unknown to ancient India. But for the Christian missionaries in the country these humble orders would for ever remain unraised. The Brahman community of Southern India are not doing for the lower classes what the casteless Britisher is doing for them. The credit of this philanthropy, of going to the homes of the low, the distressed, and the dirty, putting the shoulder to the wheel of depraved humanity, belongs to the foreigner.'

Again, let a native paper[1] point out the source of the impulse that has given rise to female education and medical relief for women:

'The Christian missionary must be esteemed to be one of the greatest benefactors of our country. . . . He has honeycombed the land with girls' schools. . . . With the wonderful aggressiveness characteristic of their vigorous race, a body of devoted women have come to live in India, to minister to the relief of the sick and educate the ignorant. . . . It is a matter of standing reproach to us that we are not able to do half as much as the Christian missionaries are doing for us. Where are the hospitals for Hindu ladies founded by the Hindu religious organizations? Where are the Hindu women who, influenced by *their* religion, are willing to devote their lives to the service of their sisters? The cause of the absence of such devotion is due to the *totally different ideas* that have been taught to them, and in a way to render them useless to themselves and other women. It is we, the men of India, that have to bear the blame. We differ in many respects from the views of missionaries, but they are a great object-lesson as to what immense good men and women can do to others.'

And once more: the standard of social morality has considerably improved in India in recent years, as seen

[1] The Madras *Hindu*.

especially in the anti-Nautch movement, which seeks to discountenance the performances of temple dancing-girls, whose presence at public functions and private entertainments has from time immemorial been considered indispensable. In connection with this movement, the necessity of something being done to *reclaim* this unfortunate class is being recognised, though the Indian reformers see no hope of help from their own people, and appeal to Christians.

'There is plenty of scope for active work,' said the *Social Reformer* of Madras recently, 'not only for policemen, but for earnest men and women—of course, among Christians. Our countrymen must pardon us for this piece of plain speaking, as they have never shown the least anxiety to reclaim the fallen : for once fallen always fallen would appear to be their maxim.'

Testimony such as this, coming as it does from reflective Hindū minds, shows clearly the direction in which hope for India lies. It can hardly come from any revival of the past, if such a thing were possible; for history would only repeat itself. The spirit of progress is abroad in the country. The educated classes are not satisfied with the existing state of things—in politics, in society, or in religion. They want something else in all these departments of life, and to become better men and citizens. Many desire to modify the existing form of government, so as to meet their felt needs and aspirations. Others are thoroughly dissatisfied with the social customs of the country; they are conscious that Hindū society is anything but what it ought to be, and desire some very radical reforms. And, then, the education which they have received has opened the eyes of a large number to the fact that their religion has become formal and superficial, and fails to touch the innermost recesses of the heart. And so they desire to purify it, to divest it of its superstitions,

and, if possible, to animate the dry bones with some vivifying force. Thus, the desire for change in all these directions is not a mere idle desire; it is a desire to change for the better, and is itself a most hopeful sign. It is undoubtedly due to the foreign influences at work in the country; and the fact needs to be realized that these three great movements—political, social, religious—have *arisen simultaneously*; and are designed to *progress together*, and on similar lines, as they have done in other lands.

But here we are confronted with a singular anomaly to which reference has already been made (p. 15). While the changes desired in the political and social spheres is a change *onward*, in the direction of the progressive institutions of the West, the proposed change that holds the ground at present in the field of religion is a change *backward* to the ancient thought and ideals of the East. In political and social matters faith is to be exercised in the principles of evolutionary development and progressive life; while in religious matters, which form the foundation of the other two, a retrogressive step is to be taken. Such guides as the late Swāmi Vivekānanda and Mrs. Annie Besant have affirmed that the future greatness of India must rest, not on going forward with the rest of the world, but on going back to the spiritual teachings of the past. They would recall India to her ancient knowledge and ancient worship. But the stubborn fact to be noted is that they did not save the country from degenerating. A tree is judged by its fruits. If the ancient spirituality was so lofty, why was it not retained? Why has it not been a mighty conserving power throughout the land? And why should the late Sir Mādhava Rao, an eminent Hindū statesman, have had to confess that no community on the face of the earth suffers more from self-created evils than the Hindū community? Why has India become

the most illiterate land in the world? Is the present moral exhaustion only an accident, or a natural development of the seed sown long ago in the religious philosophies of the East? A Bengali gentleman some time ago wrote the following:

'There is something rotten in our constitution, which no medicament can touch. When the springs of good have run dry, there is no hope for the people. Given the necessary force of character, and voluntary effort may raise beautiful constructions. Without it progress is no more possible than the saving of life by stimulants when the vital forces are failing. The sap has ceased to circulate in our national life, for the great soil of character is parched.'

And instead of planting some living seed of moral effort into this impaired national life, the present leaders would advise the people to go back to the soil where the germs of the present moral listlessness and decay were sown. But is there any hope that by seeking once more the fountain-head, the stream may be made to take a *different* course from that which it has actually pursued? Is the present state of Hindū society the legitimate or the perverted outcome of the ancient philosophy of the universe, which taught that the supreme effort was to shake off every mode of personal existence, and to be out of the world for ever, in the unbroken repose of absorption or *nirvāna?* Pantheistic thought has always exercised a paralyzing influence on all moral and human life.

And a revival of dead institutions is impossible. The older ideals have been played out, and it is folly appealing to them once more. No nation has ever gone back to its early past, its cradle-bed. The golden age is before us, not behind; and distance—a subtle artist—always lends a false sheen and glory to objects that are far away. A faith that lives on the credit of its past is not a living faith. A

religion unable to do valiant and righteous work in the present is one that the world can easily spare. The religions that look backward have no hope beyond themselves; the religion that looks forward is prophetic, and believes in a Living God, whose purposes widen as the ages roll. It is impossible to arrest India in its material, social, and political advance; nor would any true friend of the people desire it: only India must have the *same* guiding and controlling principle that is moulding and ennobling Western nations, and which interprets the life around us, and not the life of centuries ago. The present Hindū reaction against a foreign will—the resurrection of the national spirit which is now challenging the West—cannot but gain respect for the patriotism that inspires it; but much of the clamour for a 'revival of ancient Hindūism' is mere idle talk, and very few who advocate it really understand what they mean by it: it is an appeal to a false sentiment rather than a response to sincere conviction. With some, indeed, we would fain believe that it is the re-quickening of a long-dormant religious sense; and there is no way of recovering a lost spirituality but to become spiritual here and now, and to have the moral exhaustion repaired, the failing vital forces renewed, through faith in the Living God, the perennial Source of spirit life for all souls.

With reference to the 'Hindū Revivalism,' a remarkable communication appeared not long since from a Brāhman correspondent in an Indian paper,[1] from which we quote the following:

'It is a well-known biological truth that the continued existence of any type depends on its capacity to adapt itself to altered environments; and the principle holds good of all human institutions. You can no more make feudalism flourish in England to-day than you can make

[1] The *Madras Mail.*

the religion of the Puranas or Vedas serve the Hindus of to-day. . . . The very fact that the ancient institutions died out is a proof that they had ceased to suit the community. . . . Whatever of the older forces still at work can be profitably utilized should still be used, but the important thing is to recognise clearly that there can be no going back to Vedic times, and that the present state of things cannot long continue unchanged. . . . It is a sheer waste of time and energy to infuse life into the dry bones of an ancient system. It is *reformation*, and not *revival*, that is wanted.'

The Veda and the Vedānta will ever stand out among 'the monumental achievements of the human mind'; they will always be deeply interesting studies of a phase of thought through which a nation has passed; but as a key to existence, as a practical guide of life, as a stimulus to moral energy, what can they accomplish? To suppose that they discovered the highest doctrine, the final philosophy of religion, is to deny the doctrine of evolution, to reverse the order of human development. In the various religious Scriptures of the world, as in other things, there is a 'survival of the fittest'; and that will survive which speaks most closely, not so much to the intellect as to the conscience and the heart of men and women, learned and unlearned, in the West and in the East. There is nothing derogatory in this to 'the sacred books of the East'; they had a place to fill, and some noble thoughts, as we have seen, to contribute to the religious system of the world.

And Vedāntic thought is so thoroughly Indian that the *Indian Christianity* of the future will of necessity take a Vedāntic colouring. Each nation of the world and each great religion is the manifestation of a human want; and the demand of the Indian heart is for a fixed, unchangeable foundation on which the soul may rest amid the changes of this fleeting world. The God whom India seeks and must find is a God who is Eternal and Unchangeable, and who abides in the heart, whose true home is the inmost soul of

man. The West has to learn from the East, and the East from the West. The questions raised by the Vedānta will have to pass into Christianity if the best minds of India are to embrace it; and the Church of the 'farther East' will doubtless contribute something to the thought of Christendom of the science of the soul, and of the omni-penetrativeness and immanence of Deity.

It is no accident, but a Divine purpose, that has brought the East and the West together, so that each may recognise the other's strength, and understand and appreciate each other's best ideals. Just as the religion of Christ triumphed over the religions of Greece and Rome, not by destroying, but by absorbing from Greek philosophy and literature, and from Roman jurisprudence and government, all in them that was good and true, so will it be in India. Christ will yet satisfy the spiritual hunger and thirst to which the great religious ideas of the East only give expression; and India, while retaining and transmitting something of her idealistic and mystic passion and subtle thought, her desire to be liberated from her past and present *Karma* by entrance into a life that shall dispel the shadows, will surely find the enlightening revelation of the Gospel to be in *complete accord* with the best sentiments of her best minds, the true realization of the visions of her seers, the real fulfilment of the longings of her sages.

'God Himself is weaving,
Bringing out the world's dark mystery,
In the light of faith and history;
And as web and woof diminish,
Comes the grand and glorious finish,
When begin the Golden Ages,
Long foretold by seers and sages.'

Elliot Stock, Paternoster Row, London.